

# Hidden Treasure In Commercial Buildings: A White Paper

by Brad Campbell | CEO - Campbell Window Film

## IN THIS WHITE PAPER

Energy Savings, at Scale

Common Questions/Answers

Interior vs Exterior  
Window Films | How to Choose?

Choose Your Vendor Carefully

Window Films Are Not Created  
Equal | What to Look Out For

## "Maximum Rating For Cost Effectiveness"

US Department of Energy<sup>1</sup>

The enormous savings you can obtain by having window film installed on your commercial building's windows is a treasure trove just waiting to pay you handsomely for unlocking it. Post installation, owners will often ask themselves why they waited so long to increase profits and improve tenant comfort.

After interviewing experts, examining statistics, and assessing hundreds of older commercial buildings over thirty years in the window film business, I became convinced that window blinds and replacing the windows do not adequately address the problem of reducing energy losses through the windows with a reasonable return on investment (ROI). This white paper will argue in favor of having window film installed in lieu of other options. It is all too often that the savings are never captured because the options seem too expensive and disruptive to the tenants during implementation to justify the expense and effort required to obtain them.

Four of the most common questions about commercial window film are:

1. "How long does it last?"
2. "What is the typical ROI?"
3. "How much does it cost?"
4. "What is the installation time?"

I will answer these in just a moment, but first let me frame the discussion.

*"Consumer awareness is low, but those in-the-know add window film to every newly acquired property"*

If you are going to go to all the effort to make the building energy efficient, LEED certified, and comfortable for tenants, wouldn't it be nice to get the extra return on investment waiting right there in your windows? Generally speaking, if the ROI is less than three years, and the product lasts for at least fifteen years, the answer would be yes, right? Let's go back and examine the four questions:

1. **How long does window film last?** A good quality interior-applied film can last two to three decades when supplied by a reputable manufacturer. However, the warranties are usually conservative and have a 10-15 year commercial warranty which covers materials and labor for the whole term.

2. **What is the typical ROI?** Two major studies were conducted by the US Department of Energy<sup>1</sup> and by CONSOL Energy. Both concluded that the average ROI for window film is three years. We often see less than one year ROIs and 8-9 months is not unheard of. Now, imagine you have a film that lasts two decades and is paid for in less than one year. That is a lot of years for a paid-for measure to keep sending all of that savings directly back to your bottom line. Calculating the lifecycle savings shows astounding payback.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.energy.gov/eere/femp/federal-energy-management-program>



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### 3. **How much does it cost?**

While window films vary based on the materials and methods used to make them, the makeup of the films affects many things, including how well they perform in terms of blocking the sun's heat and glare, as well as how long they will last. A more expensive film also looks nicer on the glass, has less reflective shine, is more color-stable, and will have minimal iridescence (the appearance of oil on water). Prices also depend on the size and scope of the job, and the accessibility of the glass. A rule of thumb you can use for a rough calculation would be between \$8 and \$12 per square foot (of glass surface), calculated by multiplying the width by the height of each window, in inches, and then dividing that total by 144. Super high-performance films such as low-E films and decorative printed films can run much higher. Ultimately, a window film contractor will need to assess the entire scope and give you a formal proposal.

### 4. **What is the installation time?**

This can vary from building to building, but the work is usually performed at night and on weekends to avoid inconveniencing the occupants of the building. The rule of thumb is 300-400 square feet (sq. ft.) of glass per day per installer and there are typically at least two installers on a project. Using the formula for calculating square footage from #3 above allows for a rough calculation on the number of days needed. Keep in mind that access issues or old window film needing to be removed first can add considerably to this estimate, while scopes of work with easy access and large panels of glass may go considerably more quickly.

*"The whole process far exceeded my expectations"*

Michael Brooks | Operations Manager  
City National Plaza | Los Angeles, CA

### **Interior vs Exterior Installation?**

The technology in window film has made huge leaps forward in just the past few years in terms of performance and longevity, and one of the most notable advances has been in exterior window films. They are lasting much longer and have more robust warranties of up to fifteen years. Of course the warranty does not always reflect the expected lifespan, which is usually considerably longer than the warranty term if the manufacturer is conservative in their warranty structure (which most of the more reputable manufacturers will be).

Generally speaking, window films are installed on the interior surface of the glass, but there are certain instances when access is poor on the inside, performance cannot be enhanced sufficiently due to the glass type, or an appearance change is desired from the outside of a building with a dated glass color. In these cases, exterior films are an excellent solution. When making the determination whether to use interior or exterior window films, and to choose the right film for your project, you will need to consult with a window film expert.



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## Choose Your Vendor Carefully

There are two crucial components to a satisfactory outcome for your window film project. The obvious one is to select a top quality, long lasting material from a well known, reputable manufacturer. The other is less obvious: excellent materials must be matched by expert craftsmanship. One without the other will lead to unsatisfactory results because if either is subpar, there will likely be problems with aesthetics or longevity, or both. Improperly installed film may look fine at first, but may also lead to premature failure of the adhesive system down the road. So, how do you find the best contractor? I recommend checking with one of the top manufacturers by going to their website and requesting to get in touch with the territory manager for your region. There will usually also be a dealer finder on their website which will allow you to search by zip code, but a call to the territory manager will likely lead you to the best of the best dealers. Be sure that you select a company that specializes in commercial window film and has case studies on their website. There are hundreds of smaller shops that claim to do building tinting, but many of these may be oriented towards automotive customers and not geared towards contracting in commercial buildings, which requires special licensing, high insurance limits, and above all, experience in executing commercial projects with an organized and professional staff, well honed protocols, and the ability to help you through the consulting phase, which will likely include complex energy analyses and utility company rebate assistance. Social proof is another good indicator.

Look them up on YELP to ensure that they are a 5-star company, check their contractor's license against the state contractor's licensing entity's website, and Google their name to see what pops up. Their website and social media pages should be current and offer daily insights into their specialties. Lastly, look for accolades, manufacturer's awards, and certifications.

## Not All Window Films Are Created Equal.

There are many manufacturers of window film, some of which are making really good products, while others make low-cost, short-term solutions. If you're planning to keep your building for more than a few years, you should research the top manufacturers who should have a stellar reputation and the financial ability to back up a warranty claim, should one arise. Once you have found a brand you are comfortable with, you can research the top dealer for that window film brand in your area.

If you follow these guidelines, you should have a terrific outcome.

To find out more about how Campbell Window Film can help your business, please contact one of our commercial specialists at:

800-580-9997  
[www.campbellcorp.com](http://www.campbellcorp.com)  
[info@campbellcorp.com](mailto:info@campbellcorp.com)

