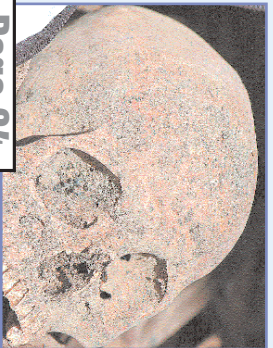


THE NEWS MARIN

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

April 22-28, 2005

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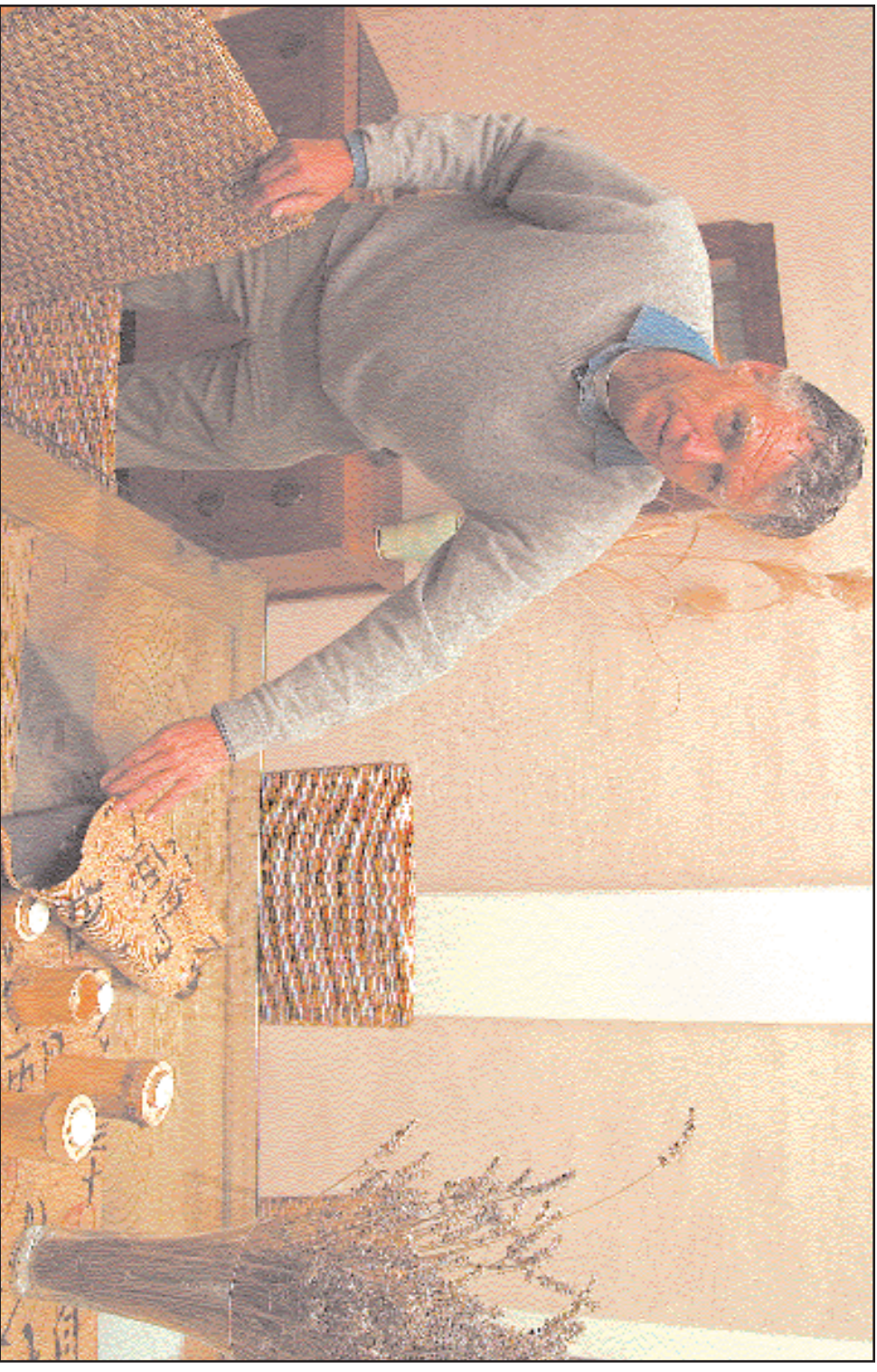
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John Shurtz remodeled his Novato home using Green building techniques and materials. He made his dining room table out of a door from a 1890s Kyoto warehouse that he got from a Japanese antique dealer in South San Francisco. The walls are made out of Earth-friendly rice plaster. Below, Greg Snowden of the Green Fusion Design Center displays some of the colorful countertops available at his store in San Anselmo.

photo by John Kokoska

Green is the new black

Environmentally friendly building goes mainstream as more realize its benefits

By ANNA GALAN
EDITOR

The term "Green building" might sound more like a unique color choice for a building than a new way of life. In Marin, it just may be the next big thing.

The up-and-coming design and construction practice integrates the needs of people and the planet, and aims to reduce

waste, lower maintenance and energy costs, and create healthier indoor environments.

Marin County and individual cities within Marin are working to create ordinances that require Green building, but builders caution that regulations could cripple the construction business if

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photo by John Kokoska



The plants in John Shurtz's yard require little maintenance and watering. Instead of the traditional lawn, he chose plants native to the area.

photo by Anna Galan

Continued from the cover

officials make them too strict. But even as builders and municipalities hash out these issues, it's becoming more apparent: Green is the new black.

Easy being Green

Building a Green home or office was once a luxury that required considerable effort and dedication. Now, with more professionals getting certified as Green builders and materials readily available at national chains like the Home Depot, Green building is becoming more mainstream than ever.

The home of John Shurtz, president of the Green Builders of Marin, exemplifies the beauty of being Green. On a Novato street of modest-looking homes and endless lawns, the remodeled

façade of his house, once appearing just as his neighbors', often makes the passerby pause. Shurtz's own home is his company's showroom, called the "Green model home." Inside,

skylights and sun tunnels let in the sunshine from outside, eliminating the need for lighting during the daytime. He has used bamboo — a rapidly renewing resource — for flooring, along with natural wool carpeting in the bedrooms. The walls are made of a naturally dyed rice plaster, eliminating the need for paint.

"My home isn't 100 percent Green," he said, pointing out some non-Green items like a pool table and leftover composite roofing used for a shed. "Sometimes that isn't possible without spending considerably

more money."

Shurtz has been able to lower his PG&E bills through the use of photovoltaic, or solar, energy and even sells the excess energy his roof-mounted solar panels generate while he is not home.

The use of natural lighting eliminates the need for electricity-using and heat-producing lamps, lowering electricity and cooling costs.

Features like those in Shurtz's home are becoming more attainable for regular homeowners, not just contractors. One resource, the Green Fusion Design Center in San Anselmo, opened just last summer.

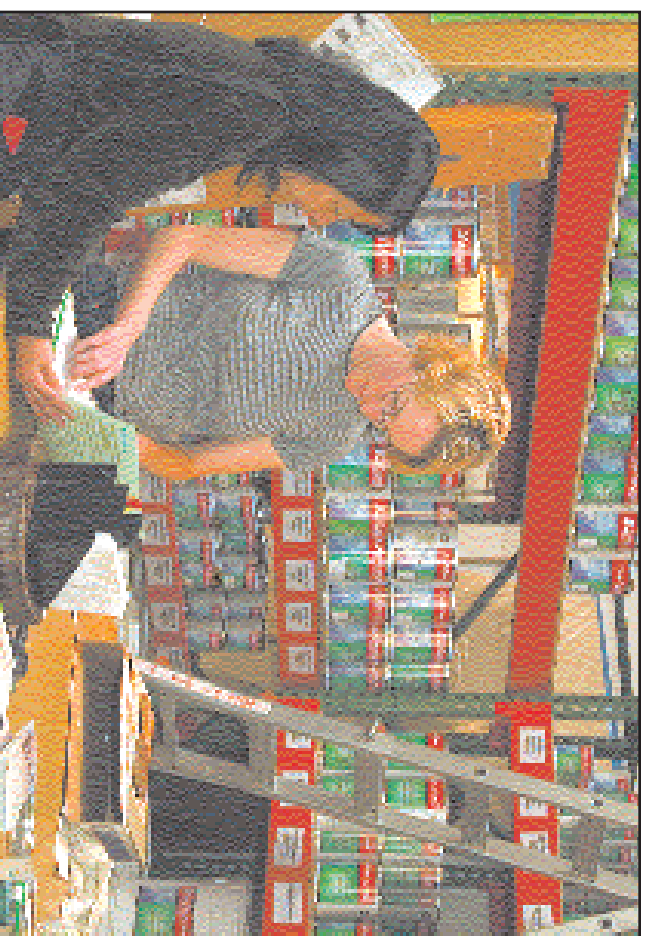
"Green building was once the domain of the hippies, and now, healthier lifestyles are becoming more mainstream," said owner Greg Snowden.

Some of his best-selling products are local, including flooring from San Rafael-based EcoTimber and organic bedding by Point Reyes Station's

Marin goes green

“Green building was once the domain of the hippies, and now, healthier lifestyles are becoming more mainstream.

– Greg Snowden



Noel Birky (right) of the Green Fusion Design Center goes over Safecoat's color options with Belle Cohen.

photo by John Kokoska

Coyuchi. Other Green products on the market include insulation made from recycled blue jeans; flyash, a byproduct of coal burning that can be used to produce a stronger, more durable and more environmentally friendly concrete; and Trex, a composite lumber product that combines plastic grocery bags with wood to create a strong and durable outdoor surface.

While Green Fusion is happy to provide these resources, it is only with the increased interest

in Green building that it has been able to succeed. Snowden tried opening a business 10 years ago that sold Green products, but he said "the timing wasn't right."

Now, the market has changed. With more products available — he stocks products from 30 manufacturers, many of which have hundreds of products — and with demand up,

Snowden hopes the second time around will be more successful. "I realized there's a market continued on next page



Employees of San Rafael's Sun Power & Geothermal Energy install a ground mount photovoltaic system.

photo courtesy of Sun Power & Geothermal Energy



San Anselmo's Green Fusion Design Center is part showroom, part gallery and part resource library. The store, which opened last summer, sells products for homeowners and contractors that comply with Green building standards and practices.

photo by John Kokoska

for this," he said, "And I decided to roll the dice."

Businesses are also catching on to the demand. Last Tuesday, 19 local businesses were honored for their energy-saving efforts through the Marin Green Business Program, now in its third year with a total of 86 businesses. Past and present honorees include the Marin Builders Association, Green Fusion Design Center, San Rafael branch of Bank of Marin, Novato Toyota, Lucasfilm and Corte Madera's Gold's Gym.

Greening the law

County officials are trying to spur the Green trend on. In 1999, Marin's Board of Supervisors

adopted a countywide theme of sustainability. The board has created a set of Green-building residential design guidelines and certify buildings based on a points system. Examples of point-gaining measures include the installation of low-flow toilets, energy-saving appliances, reclaimed lumber and double-glazed windows and doors.

The board has also implemented a program that requires any construction project to recycle or reuse half of what it would ordinarily send to a landfill. The county's energy-efficiency ordinance requires that homes more than 3,500 square feet must reduce their energy level to a level comparable to a 3,500-

square-foot home through the use of insulation, windows, furnaces and solar power. These measures, however, apply only to unincorporated areas of the county, such as Greenbrae, Marinwood and Lagunitas.

On a smaller scale, both Novato and Fairfax are in the process of examining potential Green building ordinances that would require builders to follow certain guidelines.

Sam Ruark of the county's Community Development Agency, Planning Division, works to encourage Green building through design review and a countywide rating system. He sees his role as that of an educator working, not to require people to build Green, but to let them know that they have other options. He helps maintain the Civic Center's Green building exhibit and library, gives presentations at events and coordinates workshops that train and certify contractors.

Ruark cited the sort of friendly competition that exists between Sonoma and Marin counties in terms of which is more Green. On one hand, he explains, Sonoma State University has an environment technology center that educates future builders and architects on Green practices. All city jurisdictions within Sonoma County have passed the Cities for Climate Protection, or CCA.

"On the other hand, you could say that Marin is more innovative, or Green, with its theme of sustainability and cities pursuing the CCA," Ruark said. He thinks one of the biggest benefits of Green building is the improved air quality.

"There is so much we put into our homes that is harmful," Ruark said. Some of the best, and most common, examples are wall paint, carpet and ventilation systems. "We need to learn how to build and design homes that aren't toxic to our families; to show that there are better ways."

Builders: Proceed with caution

Despite the excitement that many Green advocates share, others caution about getting overzealous. At the Marin Builders Association, both consultant Peter Arrigoni and legislative analyst Terry Hennessy agreed that individual cities within Marin shouldn't adopt different Green building ordinances.

Too many sets of regulations could hurt contractors because it would make it virtually impossible for them to achieve the proper permitting and complete a project, Arrigoni and Hennessy said.

In regard to a proposed ordinance by the cities of Novato and Fairfax, Arrigoni said the Marin Builders Association urges the cities to wait and follow the county's lead.

Hennessy is in the process of attending different city meetings to support the kind of Green point system created by the county that provides recommendations, not regulations.

"We are encouraging people to support Green business, as well as do voluntary Green building," Hennessy said. "But builders cannot wade through the requirements of 11 different cities, plus the county, just to get a job done. The process of building needs to be standard."

Another of Arrigoni's concerns is that requiring Green building would make owning, buying or building a home in Marin even more cost-prohibitive than it already is.

"We do have some concerns because to do a complete Green structure is incredibly expensive," said Arrigoni. "We want the jurisdictions to be flexible; otherwise pretty soon, a half-million-dollar house becomes a three-quarter-million house just to meet certain codes. Then, someone can't build a home because they can't meet the requirements."

Whether people argue that building Green saves or costs consumers money, and however individual cities within Marin choose

to regulate it, Green building appears to be here to stay.

"The building industry is in evolution," Ruark said.

"Now, the early adopters push and go on to the next step. Others see the economic benefits — builders see that more people demand it and can market themselves accordingly, and people are getting savvy about it."

Shurtz's experience is evidence of the change. His interest began eight years ago while renovating a 100-year-old Victorian home in Sausalito. When the remodel called for the use of old-growth redwood, Shurtz stopped to think.

"We were working on a Saturday, on a day when Greenpeace and Woody Harrelson and the Rainforest Action Network were all hang-

What makes a product Green?

There is no easy answer to this question, since Green Building is about the overall environmental impact of building for a specific site. Some criteria for designating products Green:

- Products that conserve natural resources, are durable or rapidly renewable. Examples include wool, cork, jute and bamboo.
- Products made with salvaged, recycled or agricultural waste content. Some examples include bricks, framing lumber and period hardware.
- Products that avoid toxic or other emissions.
- Products that save energy or water.
- Products that contribute to a safe, healthy indoor environment.

Source: Bay Area Build It Green



Rick Diener of the Green Builders of Marin prepares a surface for Trex decking with the help of auger driver Israel Espinoza. Trex is a decking and railing product made from a combination of reclaimed wood and plastic.

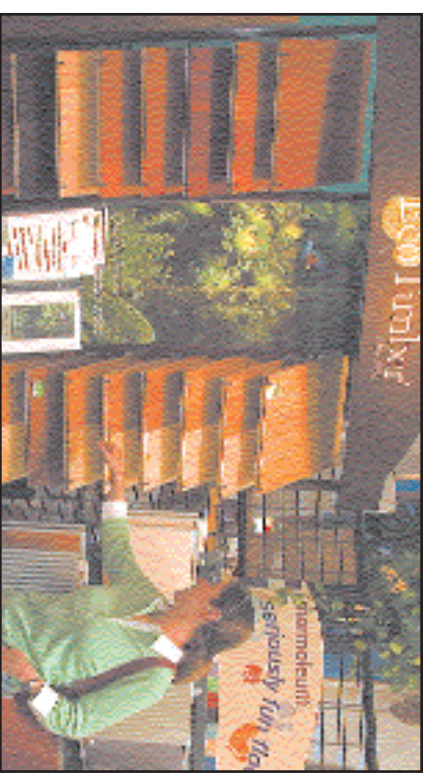
photo by KLP Studio

ing off the Golden Gate Bridge protesting the cutting down of old-growth redwood trees, particularly the Headwater Forest," Shurtz recalled. "They were doing a protest, and we were unloading old-growth redwood to put on this house, and both myself and my helper that day were

just looking at each other going, 'Wow, it doesn't feel very good what we're doing all of a sudden.'"

"That weekend, I thought a lot about it, and I came back and told my employees that we wouldn't be using old-growth wood anymore. We'd find substitutes," Shurtz said.

Though he was concerned his decision might cut out a whole section of his business, he knew he wanted to contribute to protecting the forests. Despite his initial worries, Shurtz said that going Green was the best business decision he'd ever made.



Dana Armanino, who works with the county's Green business program, picks out bamboo flooring for her home.

photo by John Kokoska

On Thursday April 21 at 7:30pm
The Community Church of Mill Valley
presents

"Turning Enemies into Friends, a Peace Process."

A forum full of facts, offered by Byron Brand, the Associate Director of the Stanford Center on Conflict and Negotiation and a Research Associate at the Institute of International Studies. Mr. Brand has built productive working relationships in places like Northern Ireland and the Middle East through practical actions that put former enemies on the road to peace. He will outline his vision in the forum, using as one of his sources the interdisciplinary courses on peace that he has taught for 20 years. It's your chance to ask questions (there will be plenty of time) and have them answered by a recognized expert in the field. Come by this Thursday. The forum is free. And there's coffee and good stuff at nine o'clock, after the serious stuff at 7:30. This is, by the way, a purely secular event, so come one, come all. We're the little church in the redwoods at Throckmorton & Olive
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