

Fresno firm's goal is LEED certification

Taylor Teter architects want to help clients incorporate green building techniques

BoNhia Lee — Staff Writer

The architects at Taylor Teter Partnership want schools and businesses to think about sustainability.

That means thinking of ways to save energy in buildings and to recycle waste and products in order to help the environment.

Taylor Teter is putting these ideas into practice through a set of guidelines put forth by the Leadership In Energy and Environmental Design, a program published by the U.S. Green Building Council.

Getting LEED certification is one of the best ways to prove that your designs and buildings truly are green.

Eight designers at Taylor Teter are already certified and another five to six are in the process of getting certification. They are using their skills to help clients come up with new ways to make their buildings environmentally friendly.

"Sustainability and design is not a new concept," said Jamie Dronyk, an assistant project manager at Taylor Teter who is LEED accredited. "In fact it's probably the oldest concept."

Before technology was created, people were designing buildings to control climate, Dronyk said. There was no air conditioning 100 years ago, so passive solar building techniques included large eaves. As technology improved over time the idea of sustainability faded away, she said.

But what Taylor Teter is recogniz-

ing is that the Central Valley area needs to become more sustainable because of its bad air quality and issues with sprawl that consume up prime agricultural land.

"I think we recognize that the need is here maybe more than anywhere else and I think we're trying to lead that effort to get the sustainability design prevalent in the Central Valley," Dronyk said.

The firm started using LEED practices about five years ago and has slowly been introducing it to their designers, then to clients and to construction and government entities with whom they work.

About 5 percent of the firm's projects are LEED projects, but the designers incorporate green elements into all of their work.

In the beginning, some of these changes could come at a higher cost, but the impact of savings at 24 and 30 percent off energy bills are significant, designers said. And some methods aren't expensive, they said.

It could be as simple as orienting a building correctly to achieve the best daylight or placing windows in the best location to make available natural outdoor lighting, which reduces energy consumption.

Or it could be making suggestions on how to improve indoor air quality to achieve optimal thermal comfort for employees. That could be through the use of low VOC -- or volatile organic compounds paint -- on walls, or carpet with recycled carbon.

"The more the public is aware of these things the more they're go-

ing to demand it," said Loren Aiton, the LEED accredited architect who spearheaded the effort at the firm. "The more they demand it, the more it will become common practice. And as it becomes common practice we improve the world."

It's catching on with the firm's five LEED projects. They include the City of Tulare Library, Real Life Church in Santa Clarita, Westlake Farms Composting Facility Administration Building in Kings County, Wingspoint Office in Bakersfield, Pacific Stihl Warehouse in Visalia and Boral Brick Plant in Terre Haute, IN.

Dronyk is working on the Tulare Library project, a 33,000-square-foot building that will be designed to increase energy performance, optimize day lighting and use recycled building materials. It will house the library, have a café and will be home to the Tulare City Council Chamber.

The other projects such as the Real Life Church in Santa Clarita, which backs up to a hillside, will have a vegetated roof. It's very sustainable and we're seeing more intelligible ways of creating a vegetated roof, Aiton said.

"We're creating an environment that's better for everybody and it's better for us too," Aiton said. "We're creating a world where we're all going to benefit from it."

Going green wasn't in the church's original plans. They actually stumbled onto it by accident when it was one of three designs presented to them by Taylor Teter.

"One of the three was for an underground sort of facility and it seemed to work best for the neighbors," said Jeremy Vanderlinden, executive pastor. "We wanted as little affect as possible on the neighbors who are directly behind us so we decided to go that way. It started this snowball effect."

The 37,000-square-foot building will essentially be built under ground with only one wall exposed. The other three walls and the roof will be covered with dirt. The church expects to use less energy on air conditioning and have a 40 to 50 percent savings on energy.

"It's more money, but increased efficiency," Vanderlinden said.

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The Business Journal (USPS 145-100) is published Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays for \$99 for 52 weeks, or Friday issue only is \$59 for 1 year, \$94 for 2 years and \$135 for 3 years. The Business Journal Inc., 1315 Van Ness Ave., Ste. 200, Fresno, CA 93721. P.O. Box 126, Fresno, CA 93707-0126. Periodical postage is paid at Fresno, CA.

Presorted Standard Mail Enclosed
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to:
The Business Journal,
P.O. Box 126, Fresno, CA 93707-0126.

Telephone (559) 490-3400 • Fax (559) 490-3531
Adjudicated a newspaper of general circulation by
Decree No. 14315 of the Superior Court of Fresno
County, March 4, 1911.