

What's so good about "green"?

The desire to be environmentally friendly was a focus during Earth Week in April, yet it also seems to be a focus in the construction industry and the U.S. in general in recent years. Construction News wanted to know if the "green movement" was really beneficial. Following is what we found out from our construction counterparts in Austin and San Antonio.



Photo courtesy of The Bommarito Group
The 30,000-sf Lance Armstrong building was designed to be environmentally friendly.

One award-winning project in Austin designed to be environmentally friendly is the Lance Armstrong Foundation corporate headquarters. The project's general contractor was **SpawMaxwell**. **Lake Flato** designed the building in collaboration with **The Bommarito Group**. **Chris Savasky** was the project manager; **Todd Evans** was superintendent; and **Meg Drucker** was the project coordinator.

Cost-saving measures have been taken to ensure that the building is energy efficient. Low-flow plumbing fixtures reduce water usage by 30 percent and a glass

and steel roof maximizes natural light and minimizes energy use. The project achieved LEED Gold certification and received a Four-Star rating from Austin Energy Green Building Program. The location and showers encourages employees to bike to work and to utilize mass transit. There were even trees that had fallen in the forest that were used to build some of the furniture.

"The design breathes new life and energy into the building and community and creates a welcoming and healthy environment to LIVESTRONG," said **Marla Bommarito-Crouch**, The Bommarito Group.

In San Antonio, it's been three years since **Alamo Architects** and **OCO Architects** moved into revamped properties on a shared two-acre lot on South Flores Street.

An old industrial warehouse was transformed into the award-winning SoFlo Office Studios in 2007 and was awarded LEED Silver Certification by the USGBC in 2008.

A multitude of green building ideas were incorporated into the conversion, like reusing materials from the old warehouse, installing rainwater and condensate collection systems and bringing natural light into the offices.

Jerry Lammers, Alamo Architects' principal, reflects on some of the value gained by going green.

"Our collection system offsets 70 percent of our need. We have a 6,500-gallon tank."

In the future Alamo plans to install an additional tank that will increase the irrigation ability to 100 percent of the firm's needs. Lammers said native and adaptive plants used in the landscape reduce water usage and maintenance as well.

By increasing the amount of natural light into the building Lammers believes Alamo has reduced electrical usage.

"It is difficult to make direct comparisons to our old offices because we are in about three times as much space, so our electric bills are a lot less than they would



Photo by Chris Cooper
Large concrete flagstones in the SoFlo Studios courtyard are actually remnants of the old warehouse parking lot and driveways.

have been if you took the space we were in and expanded it."

Even reusing old long-leaf yellow pine from a mezzanine in the building for paneling proved to be a green side benefit.

"We may have not saved much money in the long run, but we did not use any additional natural resources and we created summer jobs for people."

An unexpected side benefit to the green project is that it has become a community education vehicle and example for clients.

"We can be in a meeting in our conference room and walk out the door and say, 'Here is a green building idea and concept and here is how it works,'" Lammers said.

"On the education side, at least twice a semester there is a class from UTSA that is assigned to come over and analyze our building in terms of what are some of the concepts that have been introduced or that were being used." —km/kf

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