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## Orinda City Hall Receives Green Recognition

By Andrea A. Firth



Orinda City Hall exterior, west side. Photo Tod Fierner

Being "green" requires action and participation. At City Hall in Orinda, illuminated signs prompt employees to "open the windows" so they can benefit from the breeze coming over the Berkeley hills and minimize the energy used to heat and cool their offices. Bike lockers and a private shower are available to encourage staffers to make the journey to work on two wheels thus reducing the carbon footprint of their commute. But in truth, City Hall-as designed and built-enables employees to work in a demonstrably green environment without even lifting a finger.

Orinda City Hall was recently awarded the Gold LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification-an internationally recognized benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of green buildings. No other newly constructed City Hall in California has received this distinction, believes Monica Pacheco, Assistant to the City Manager. The certification is quantified on a point-based system that recognizes the environmentally sound and sustainable green attributes of a building. "We initially thought that we would reach a silver certification, but the energy efficiency of the building pushed us up to gold," explains Pacheco.

"Building green is very collaborative process that requires a lot of input from a variety of sources at the outset," says Pacheco, who came on board as the City staff made the move from aging, temporary portables to the new City Hall in June of 2007. The new building's site is situated on otherwise undevelopable land close to B.A. R.T. (A private church owns the land, and PG&E lines traverse the lot.) Built into a steep hillside, the building takes advantage of the cooling aspect of the earth-walls feel cool or warm to the touch depending upon location.

Sleek, curved and earth-toned on the outside, City Hall's white, naturally bright interior is comfortably industrial with green elements integrated throughout the building's design and materials. Lights work on sensors adjusting automatically to an abundance of natural light that pours in through the many windows. Ninety percent of work spaces have natural light views. Copiers are centralized in communal alcoves to reduce the exposure to heat and fumes and to coax employees out of their chairs. Floors are made of sustainable cork, walls are insulated with recycled denim, and furniture is made with water-based, nontoxic materials, such as the pressed wheat flower and sunflower seeds used for conference room tables. Waterless urinals, dividers made from recycled yogurt containers, and dual flushing systems make the bathrooms in the building particularly energy efficient.

Although detractors of the new City Hall insist the money would have been better spent filling Orinda's many potholes, the cost savings associated with the building design are still to be realized. With more than two years' worth of energy consumption data now available, Pacheco notes that they will soon be able analyze the money saved through the energy efficient design.



Orinda City Hall interior, ground floor Planning Department. Photo Tod Fierner

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