

Suben | Dougherty and Rodale Inc.:

The "Green" Team

By Susan A. Dougherty

"Green building" design is not a new concept but is often met with a perception that 'it costs too much'. Suben/Dougherty's mission includes educating its clients to understand how a green (sustainable) work environment can enhance their productivity and overall workplace satisfaction—issues that offer a much greater positive economic impact over time versus simply savings on up front costs.

Rodale Inc.'s core mission, through their signature health and wellness publications, is to inspire and enable people to improve their lives and the world around them. When Suben/Dougherty was commissioned to design Rodale's new 160,000 SF New York headquarters at 733 Third Avenue, it was a union of two like minds and missions. It was such a pleasure to meet a client who already "talked-the-talk" and philosophically "walked-the-walk". Our only challenge with Rodale was to encourage them to "walk-the-walk" with regard to their own corporate work environment. Happily, the concept was immediately embraced.

The trend towards "green" corporate office design has become more prevalent as more manufacturers are producing sustainable construction and furniture products than ever before. As little as five years ago, these products carried a premium cost. Today, the abundance of such products has increased competition and lowered costs; most are now competitively priced.



The "Coffee Bar" and reception area at the Rodale Inc. offices.

The primary challenge to sustainable design lies in the design of the facility's infrastructure and ensuring that it is fabricated and installed according to a very rigorous set of specifications. This requires extreme teamwork on the part of the architect, engineer, general contractor/construction manager, landlord (for interior fit-outs) and client. If the rigorous infrastructure requirements are properly implemented, operating costs will be reduced over time, yielding a long term savings.

BUILDING A GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

At Rodale, Suben/Dougherty, in conjunction with the engi-

neering firm of Bard, Rao + Athenas, designed a state-of-the-art "green" infrastructure for their five floors. The design is highlighted with these key elements:

- **Maximizing Light**—Every private office and conference room has a glass storefront, with the majority of these rooms being interior spaces. This plays heavily into the wellness aspect of being "green" as it maximizes the amount of natural daylight flowing through the space.
- **Daylight Harvesting Systems**—Light control motion detectors, easy to implement, yielded significant savings immediately. These lighting systems automatically control the interior lighting levels to respond to the amount of natural daylight entering the space. The lighting fixtures within the space are multi-zoned to respond to the varied exposures.
- **Heating, Ventilation & Cooling**—The HVAC systems were designed with multiple zones and constantly computer-monitored so the optimum temperature is maintained throughout the space, eliminating hot and cold spots and energy waste.
- **Materials, Finishes and Furniture**—Hand picked to be environmentally and user friendly, these products were harvested/manufactured in a way that is not harmful to the environment. They contain recycled materials or rapidly renewable materials (recyclable as well) that are easy to maintain, requiring no hard chemicals for cleaning and containing no materials that could harm the end user.

THE NEXT GENERATION OF MATERIALS

A sampling of the palette of "green" materials specified for Rodale include: carpet tile manufactured by Shaw Industries with recycled content in both the backing and face yarns; bamboo wood flooring and millwork with water based finishes (bamboo is a rapidly renewable material); Benjamin Moore paints with low/no VOCs (volatile organic compounds); systems furniture panel fabrics by Knoll which contain recycled yarns; Ecoveil window shades manufactured by MechoShade Systems, millwork with strawboard as the substrate; another rapidly renewable material. The Knoll Life Chair was selected for use throughout the facility; the chair is primarily composed of recycled content and low VOC paint finishes.

But by far the space's most unique feature, and one that will certainly set the Rodale offices apart from all other sustainable projects, is a programmatic element that is a literal extension of Rodale's health and wellness mandate. Here is where the like-minds of the "green" team, both architect and client, found true inspiration...designed to be the centerpiece of the main entry floor is a two-story glass enclosed Yoga room...allowing no one, staff nor visitor, an excuse not to "walk-the walk"!

The first phase of the facility, built by Sweet Construction Corporation, was completed in July 2005. ■