

TODD JERSEY ARCHITECTURE

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Architect stresses 'sustainability'

by Jonna Palmer, Business writer

Berkeley, California - To some of us, recycling usually means remembering to separate the aluminum cans, glass bottles and newspaper from the rest of the garbage before setting it on the curb.

But for local sustainable architecture proponents, it can also mean something a little bigger -- like designing a home remodel or a building using renewable resources.

Todd Jersey is one Berkeley architect who subscribes to that theory, but instead of focusing his business on those who are already gung-ho about sustainability, he likes to show his mainly mainstream clients how ecologically-friendly design and materials can also help them save money and improve their buildings.

"If they're not environmentally minded, I don't usually talk about ecology," he said. "I'll talk about energy efficiency, (which is) a language they understand."

Jersey said he first began to focus on ecological architecture after designing a house in Piedmont and watching the natural resources on the lot disappear as the residence went up. Now, like other ecological design advocates, he tries to use renewable resources whenever possible, such as sustainably-harvested softwood, non-toxic materials and passive solar heating.

"We're certainly pleased with the final result," said church board president Robert Luse. The trustees especially like the use of light in the gym, he said, since fluorescent lights rarely need to be turned on.

Jersey also has begun designing buildings for strictly environmentally oriented clients who want him to draw up plans that include features such as straw-bale construction or rammed-earth walls.

But sticking mainly with more mainstream clients is the best way for him to help change the way buildings are designed -- and keep bread on the table, he said.

Margot McDonald, a professor at California Polytechnic University, San Luis Obispo's architecture school, said although sustainable and energy-efficient design is catching on, few practitioners can survive if they focus exclusively on environmentally-oriented clients.

Instead, she said, many sustainable architects will work on the "soft-sell" with traditional clients as Jersey does.

Still, she expects the field will continue to grow, especially as resources become more scarce. "It's definitely becoming more prevalent," she said. "I think eventually it will just become standard practice."