

> Green business is everyone's business by Misha Gonzalez

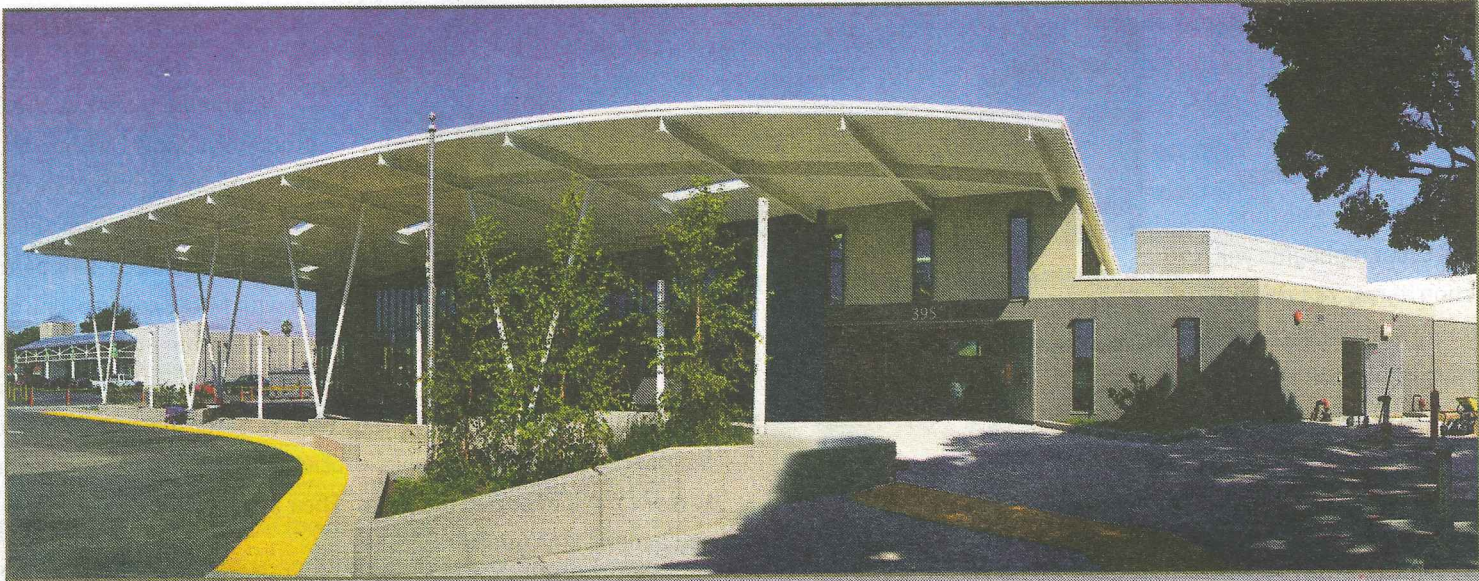
Sustainable business practices and sustainable design go hand in hand. murakami/Nelson has designed many sustainable projects including the Lake Chalet Restaurant, LEED Gold, and most recently the San Lorenzo Library with Group 4 Architects, LEED Silver.

We've always made strides to conserve resources and minimize waste in our workplace. Recently, we renewed this commitment to sustainability by renewing our certification as a Bay Area Green Business. Our desire to maintain a healthy, efficient workplace falls

solutions. Working in this way allows you to benefit from their expertise and experience "greening" other offices. Suggested improvements will vary in complexity but where more expensive upgrades are required, a green consultant can help you to calculate a realistic pay-back period enabling your business to see

tangible savings down the road. Energy consumption in the workplace is an area where

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in line with our commitment to preserving our environment.

Any Oakland business can promote sustainability by operating as a green business. Small and medium-size local businesses can become certified as a Green Business through the Bay Area Green Business Program. This program distinguishes businesses that protect, preserve and sustain our environment. Pursuing this certification requires a business to evaluate its energy consumption, recycling efforts, purchasing practices, use of green cleaning and office products, among other criteria. The practice of using less more efficiently provides the dual benefit of environmental stewardship and tangible savings.

The Bay Area Green Business Program assists local businesses in connecting with environmental agencies and local utilities, offers incentives, and verifies that their robust standards have been met or exceeded. The improvements we made during our recent recertification range in scale from simple changes, such as providing new labels for recycling and waste sorting areas, to more comprehensive upgrades to lighting and plumbing fixtures. Complying with California Green Business standards can cost a lot less than you'd think due to rebates and incentive programs available.

To begin this process, conduct an internal audit and begin a California Green Business Program application. This is a free process that generates awareness about how your business is using resources and where there is room for improvement and savings. Though comprehensive, this process need not be overwhelming. Green business consultants will advise your business and provide information about programs that can help cover the cost of upgrading your facilities.

At each step your consultant will put you in contact with green business professionals from East Bay Municipal Utility District, Waste Management, and others who will collaborate with your business to perform audits and help match areas for improvement with green



every business has room for improvement. murakami/Nelson faced a challenge with outdated fixtures in parts of our office, but through SmartLights, a program that helps businesses with energy efficiency, we were able to receive a free energy audit and learn about our PG&E rebate eligibility. This allowed us to replace 90 percent of our lights and upgrade to more efficient lighting fixtures at a fraction of the cost.

Water use is a topic on everyone's mind with the current drought. In addition to peace of mind, a reduction in consumption can have very real savings for many businesses. A water efficiency audit from EBMUD can help you determine where additional conservation efforts can be made. By replacing our sinks' aerators, an upgrade free to EBMUD customers, and switching to High Efficiency Toilets (HETs) that only use 1.28 gallons per flush (gpf) we've seen our water use decrease dramatically.

A number of subtle improvements when taken all together can enhance your company's operations as a green business and produce long-term savings through reduced operational costs. Waste considerations begin with purchasing decisions. The quantity and quality of products your company purchases have a direct impact on what enters the waste stream. Pollution and wastewater measures are easy, cost-effective ways to improve the health and safety of your workplace.

One component of certification requires forming a "Green Team" within your office. This simple step has helped murakami/Nelson collaboratively make green choices to meet our office's specific needs and allows us to continually improve the way we operate as a green business.

There are many benefits to receiving a California Green Business certification. It is a clear way to express your values as a company and indicates that your practices meet a standard of excellence in environmental stewardship. An additional advantage of certification is your inclusion in the California Green Business directory. As "green" consumers increasingly become the rule rather than the exception, inclusion in a resource such as this can be a great boon. This directory can be found at greenbiz.ca.gov and allows you to contact California Green Businesses of any kind by searching in your region. Getting certified as a Bay Area Green Business is a wise decision any business can feel good about. ■

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