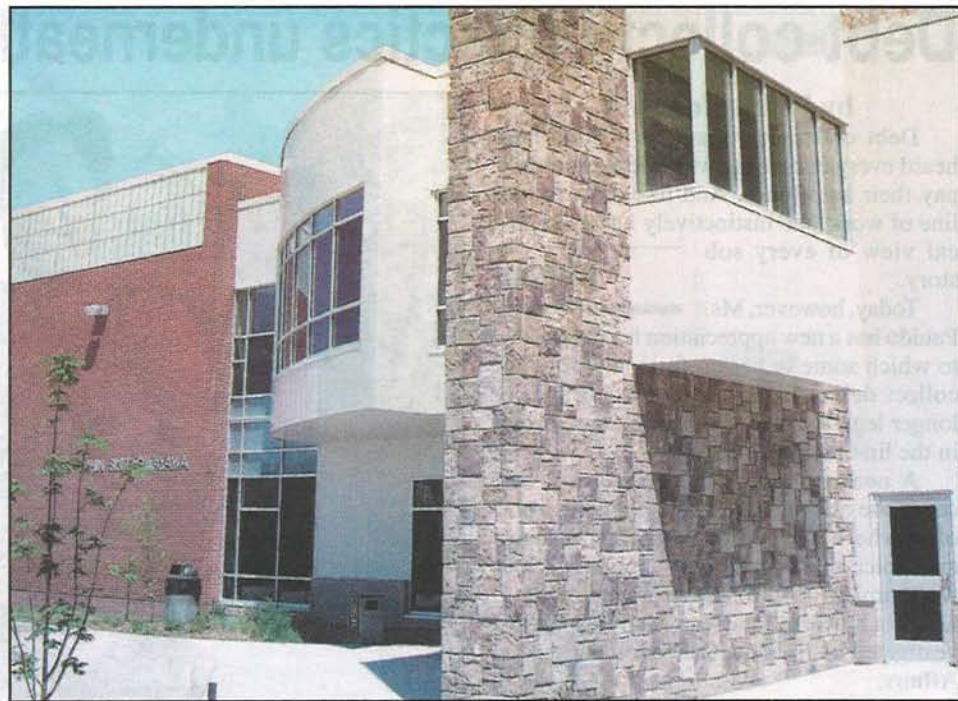




The Prairie Hill Learning Center Earth House in Roca, near Lincoln, by The Architectural Partnership.



The Porcupine K-8 School in Porcupine, S.D., currently being reviewed for LEED Silver certification, a project by Encompass Architects.

Green design continues to gain momentum, strength with architectural planning

by Lori McGinnis

Going green is becoming a practice in nearly all architecture projects in Lincoln.

The green trend is becoming more prominent and mainstream, said Todd Hesson, vice president of Encompass Architects.

Incorporating green practices into a design starts from the very beginning, said James Dyck, principal at The Architectural Partnership.

The design industry has many options available to create high-performance buildings, said Thomas Warn, senior principal at Terracon.

The current green trend started as a fringe movement about three decades ago but has become mainstream due to acceptance of climate change, unstable fuel supply and costs, political instability in oil regions and negative environmental practices, Hesson said.

"There appears to be widespread public acceptance of environmental concerns," he said. "This concern has translated to public pressure and political will to begin addressing environmental issues."

Many municipalities and federal agencies have adopted LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification as a requirement for new projects, he said.

LEED certification involves passing a test administered by the United States Green Building Council. The test determines knowl-

edge and understanding on general green building concepts, application of LEED credits and building certification process.

Up until April, there was a single test for accreditation of all LEED programs such as



Hesson

new construction, homes, commercial interiors, core and shell, etc. Now a different test is given for each of the programs and requires the accredited professional to specialize in a particular area.

"There is little doubt that green design is not only gaining strength but also becoming the norm," Hesson said.

Green design starts at the beginning of a project as soon as an architect is hired and must be considered in all decisions related to the project, Dyck said.

"This is not something you do at the end. Green starts with the site selection and build-

ing orientation," he said.

While the number of LEED certified projects continues to grow, not all projects are seeking the certification, Dyck said. Some builders using are LEED standards but will not seek the formal certification because of the extra cost involved, he said. It could cost \$20,000 to \$30,000 to hire a consultant and seek the certification, he said.

Dyck said that as of two years ago Nebraska had about 14 LEED certified projects. One of the more significant ones is the University of Nebraska-Lincoln International Quilt Study Center. California, by comparison, has about 480 LEED certified buildings, he said.

In addition to more buildings seeking LEED certification, most manufacturers are using LEED criteria to market their products, Dyck said.

"Clients are realizing that this is not only

the right thing to do but also that it can be the most cost effective approach when you consider the total cost of constructing and operating a building," Dyck said.

Designers have several green options they can use, Warn said.

They include: using more natural light; reducing the number and increasing the efficiency of selected light fixtures; using low VOC (volatile organic compound) products and recycled materials; using Energy Star appliances and low-flow bathroom fixtures; and incorporating reflected window glazing and roofing material in design specifications.

"The green trend in construction and building renovation is getting stronger," Warn said. "The real drivers tend to be increased operating efficiency and an increasing market awareness by owners and tenants on preferring high-performance space."

As time goes on, more materials and systems are developed and tried in efforts to create highly efficient space and more cost effectiveness, Warn said. As successes are realized, architects incorporate them into their next designs, allowing for further trial and enhancement as situations dictate.