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Rodale Inc.'s new 160,000 sq. ft. New York headquarters at 733 Third Avenue (above and below) is a model in sustainable design.



Meeting of minds leads to dream green facility

When Suben/Dougherty was commissioned to design Rodale Inc.'s new 160,000 s/f New York headquarters at 733 Third Avenue, it was a union of two like minds and missions.

Rodale's core mission, vis-à-vis their signature health and wellness publications, is to enable and inspire people to improve their lives and the world around them; Suben/Dougherty's mission is to educate their clients to understand how a "green" (sustainable) work environment can enhance their own productivity and overall workplace satisfaction.

Susan Dougherty, partner, states, "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 primary challenge 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.

One of the easiest measures to implement, light control motion detectors, yields significant savings almost immediately. A daylight harvesting lighting system automatically controls the interior lighting levels to respond to the amount of natural daylight entering the space. To properly achieve this, the lighting fixtures within a space need to be multi-zoned to respond to the varied exposures. HVAC systems are constantly computer-monitored so the optimum temperature is maintained throughout the space.

At Rodale, Suben/Dougherty, in conjunction with the engineering firm of Bard, Rao + Athenas, designed a state-of-the-art "green" infrastructure for the five floors.

Every private office and confer
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SPECIAL REPORT: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

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ence 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 available to each staff person and allows daylight to flow through the space.

Materials, finishes and furniture were hand picked to be environmentally and user friendly.

These products are harvested or manufactured in a way that is not harmful to the environment, they should preferably contain recycled

materials or rapidly renewable materials (ultimately, they themselves should be recyclable) and they need to be easy to maintain, requiring no hard chemicals for cleaning and containing no materials or compounds that can harm the end user.

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 VOC's (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); and all task seating throughout is the Knoll Life Chair which 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, will be complete in June 2005. ■