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## A GREEN concept



**CHIEFTAIN PHOTO/MIKE SWEENEY**

**Paul Huber, Craig Eliot and Tom Corlett discuss green building concepts. Behind them are architect's drawings for the Maple Leaf medical building.**

### Pueblo design team promotes environmental friendly construction

**By MARGIE WOOD**  
THE PUEBLO CHIEFTAIN

Think green.

Green for protecting the environment. Green for saving money. And . . .

"Green is the new red, white and blue," says Tom Corlett. "This is what will get us away from our reliance on foreign resources."

Corlett and two other green-thinkers, Craig Eliot and Paul Huber, have converged into a consulting and design company called Sustainable Building Concepts, working with planners, architects and builders to promote the green building

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concept.

Eliot's face is widely known as a weatherman on KOAA-TV, and he said he always was interested in the environmental aspects of meteorology. He and his wife got involved in green building as homeowners, designing their house to take advantage of Pueblo sunshine and avoid volatile organic compounds in paint, carpets and glues that were used in construction.

Corlett, a Pueblo native who returned to Rye when he retired from the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation in Arizona, met Huber when he went to help with construction of a straw-bale house in Beulah. Huber, who started a construction company called Ecostruct, was the contractor for the house.

The place they all three got together was the Southern Colorado Renewable Energy Society.

"We thought maybe there was something we could do about the way houses are built - things that worked for my wife and me," Eliot said.

Corlett said, "Pueblo seemed like such a natural place to do this, where we still have relatively inexpensive land. And there are so many people coming here from other places, and they're interested in these ideas about sustainable building."

Huber brought his experience as a project manager, builder and solar-energy installer. The green building concept, he said, "is about making the building smart, comfortable, user-friendly. You think about the operation cost, not just the construction cost, and make it more efficient for years to come."

What green building is *not*, Eliot stresses, is more expensive than conventional construction. If it costs a few dollars more in construction, the cost will be made up quickly in reduced utility costs.

And businesses have discovered that adding more daylight instead of artificial light saves them money by reducing absenteeism and increasing productivity, he said.

There also are tax incentives, both credits and deductions, for employing green techniques.

In the case of Eliot's house, he said he saved enough through those government programs to pay the cost of mortgage insurance.



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**COURTESY GRAPHIC/COLIN FANNING**

**This drawing for a 'solar village' could be employed in retrofitting an older neighborhood to meet modern needs.**

One of the basic concepts of green building is to orient the building on its lot and design the windows to take maximum advantage of daylight to reduce reliance on artificial light. That can be enhanced by putting in sensors to turn lights on when they're needed and off when they aren't; or motion sensors to turn lights on when someone enters a room.

Fluorescent bulbs can replace incandescent bulbs for more savings on the utility bill. Using better-quality windows and adding attic insulation will save even more. "People worry so much about the cost of gas going up at the pump," Eliot said. "The same is true for utility costs. So if you can take advantage of the sun, what will you save over 25 years in utility costs?"

There are "pervious" pavers for parking lots that allow more water to drain into the soil rather than running off, alleviating drainage problems that accompany larger impervious surfaces. There's recycled metal roofing that can look like any surface you want, or flooring that looks like hardwood at a fraction of the cost - but it's still biodegradable. There are waterless toilets that can save thousands of gallons of water.

There's a company that rents carpet squares for commercial buildings. "In three years they come back and take it up, grind it up and recycle it," Eliot said. "It sounds whacky, but they do it."

They are working on a medical office building called the Maple Leaf building in Pueblo's North Pueblo Boulevard business park area, and expect it to be the first building in Pueblo to be LEED-certified. The acronym stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, and it is the rating service for the U.S. Green Building Council.

"Just for being LEED-certified, it will qualify for \$1.80 per square foot in tax deductions, plus a 30 percent tax credit. Then you add on the savings they'll have on utility bills," Eliot said.

The Maple Leaf project also seems to have cemented a good working relationship with HGF Architects, which is the firm designing the building.

"They got the concept right away," Eliot said. "Tom Printz Construction, too. They see it. It's not trying to put a man on the moon."

Indeed, the "green team" members say they've found wide-ranging acceptance of the concept, once people realize "we're not talking about a Jetson house," as Eliot put it.

In fact, Huber said, "I like to work with people who consider their building to be an heirloom, something that will still be good in 25 or 50 years, an investment in the future and the environment."

Amendment 37, the renewable energy mandate that Colorado voters passed in 2004, has brought the public utilities into the movement and put Colorado in the limelight. Gov. Bill Owens has issued an executive order in favor of the concept, and Denver's Mayor John Hickenlooper has endorsed a "greenprint" for Denver building, not to mention the Vatican and the United Nations

Pueblo is ideally positioned to attract green manufacturing businesses, Corlett said. "We could get a solar panel manufacturing industry going. These are things we need in this area, and we could be an industry leader.

"It bothers me that we have all these programs to help people with their energy bills. Of course they need help, but why don't we get in front of it, and help people reduce their energy needs in the first place?" he mused.

Their ideas don't stop at the individual building level. They would like to work toward better use of existing neighborhoods and they are interested in the Pueblo Neighborhood Partnership's ideas about encouraging "charter neighborhood" zoning that would encourage small businesses like boutique groceries and restaurants in residential neighborhoods.

They even have a rudimentary design for a "solar village" that would retrofit an older neighborhood for a new century.

And they are interested in Fort Carson's sustainability effort to make itself use at least 50 percent renewable energy in 10 years, Corlett said.

"They're doing a great job with it, and I think it could be a real healing factor between Pueblo and Colorado Springs."



**COURTESY GRAPHIC/HGF ARCHITECTS**

**This view from above in plans for the Maple Leaf building shows solar panels that will supply part of the building's energy needs.**

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Web site (under development): [www.sbcgreenteam.com](http://www.sbcgreenteam.com)

**U.S. Green Building Council**

**The U.S. Green Building Council's core purpose is to transform the way buildings and communities are designed, built and operated.**

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- The council says its collective power is leading the transformation of the building industry and market to sustainability.

Web source: [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org) ; call 202-828-7422.

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