

The PUBLIC SPIRIT

EcoStar hosts first 'green' building roundtable

By Don Eriksson
Staff Writer

DEVENS — EcoStar, a service of the Devens Eco-Efficiency Center created by the Devens Enterprise Commission (DEC), has held the first in what will be a regular quarterly series of roundtable discussions to share business ideas and experiences emphasizing efficiency and environmental awareness.

The first roundtable, held this month, focused on sustainable building construction and site development.

The words "green" and "sustainable" are fast becoming buzzwords in the building industry across the country.

The interactive discussion focused on the use of advanced building concepts. In these concepts, environmentally friendly and efficient components garner Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) points under a U.S. Green Building Council program.

Points are awarded

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from a cost/benefit analysis. Government reimbursement dollars are attached. The more points, the greener the project. LEED levels include silver, gold and platinum with criteria for old and new construction.

Al Collins, of Habitat Advisory Group of Groton, said 30 percent in energy costs were shaved from a recent Fidelity Bank project that carried a payback of one-and-a-half years.

Cliff Cort, of Triumph Leasing, spoke of 29 LEED points Triumph was awarded for its recently completed Triumph Smart Space modular-building development.

Senate Construction, which has just completed major renovations at Phoenix Park, has made a strategic decision to have all staff members LEED certified, said Robert France. Another Senate project is using geothermal energy.

The Bristol-Myers Squibb facility at Devens is aimed at acquiring LEED silver certification, said Sarita Croce, of Bris-

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tol-Myers Squibb.

Rick Gilles, of Barnraisers Inc. of Ayer, spoke about increasing the use of building information management and modeling prior to construction.

Modeling does take man hours plus one person dedicated to pushing a project forward, said Collins. However the potential savings are significant.

The Fidelity project, for example, wound up with a 31 to 32 percent energy savings that differed only 2 or 3 percent from the modeling plan, he said.

Energy management and the maximized use of natural light can only work if employees are willing to work in harmony with a building's design, he added.

Regarding exterior criteria, Peter Lowitt, director and land-use administrator for DEC, said runoff at the MassDevelopment office goes into

an underground cistern for irrigation use.

The Evergreen Solar building under construction on Barnum Road is using a Devens-required water infiltration system, said Neil Angus, DEC environmental planner.

Soil-permeability rather than percolation-rate tests are part of new Department of Environmental Protection standards.

"The hardest part is local permitting. People are set in their ways," said Collins, a member of Groton's Sustainable Community Study Committee. "Unless you talk with each other, it's useless."

"Devens was created with Boston Society of Architects and developed by charette," said Lowitt. "If it were to be done today, we'd be required to be LEED certified. The world is pushing us faster. We need to get

greener faster than we'd like."

Lowitt developed EcoStar with a steering committee. Members included Nashua River Watershed Association Director Elizabeth Ainsley Campbell; Martha Demerjian, of Eglomise Designs; Sally Edwards, of the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production; former Devens Committee member Robert Eisengrein, former Devens Department of Public Works superintendent Charles Duvall and DEC member Lisa McLaughlin.

All new construction at Devens is subject to sustainable-development criteria.

The roundtable discussion was moderated by Angus. Participants included Collins; France, John Finemore and Michael O'Hare, of Senate Construction of Shirley; Gilles; Cort; Michael Lanney and Robert Beland, of Apex Properties of Leominster; Francis W. Parker Charter Essential School climate change and school redevelopment teacher Judy Gilson; and Croce.