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# **CONSTRUCTION UPDATE: Sonoma County projects join pilot green-building program**

## **Sonoma Mountain, Shiloh Sustainable villages work toward new, 'holistic' goal**

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STAFF REPORTER**

ROHNERT PARK -- Two Sonoma County projects are part of a nationwide pilot green-building-certification program that analyzes the ecological impact of an entire community rather than just one building or house.

Codding Enterprises' 175-acre Sonoma Mountain Village redevelopment in southeast Rohnert Park and North Street Partners' three-acre Shiloh Sustainable Village project in Windsor are part of the Washington-based U.S. Green Building Council's forthcoming Neighborhood Development rating system. It's part of a certification program called Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, developed by the council, the Congress for the New Urbanism and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Those two North Bay projects were among about five dozen around the nation that met enough of the proposed criteria to be considered for the program, according to Lois Fisher of Fisher & Hall Urban Design in Santa Rosa. The firm worked Codding on its LEED-ND applications and site plans and has consulted with several North Bay cities on their form-based land-use codes.

Carlile Macy of Santa Rosa developed the LEED-ND candidate site design for North Street Partners.

Major considerations for LEED-ND certification include:

- \* Building in a "smart" location, or one that maximizes density and minimizes automobile travel
- \* Accommodating pedestrians
- \* Locating close to water and wastewater infrastructure
- \* Protecting imperiled species and ecology
- \* Conserving wetlands and agricultural land
- \* Avoiding construction in a floodplain
- \* Limiting irrigation.

\* Managing storm water.

The proposed ND rating system, which is scheduled for adoption with changes in 2009, is the most holistic of the LEED rating regimens because it takes the context of a development into consideration, according to Ms. Fisher.

"There has been debate in the green community for a while because we've been making green buildings and certifying them platinum, and they are out in a field 100 miles away from anything," she said, referring to the highest building rating in the LEED program.

Codding started designing Sonoma Mountain Village to the draft elements of LEED-ND about a year ago, according to Chief Sustainability Officer Geof Syphers. The company found that an aggressively natural storm water management system would help.

"So much about the way storm water moves around a site impacts habitat for animals, cost and water usage, so if we created a plan for the site that was ready for drought and flooding it will be a more secure community," he said.

The plan has ended up going beyond LEED-ND in that it is turning out to be less expensive and better ecologically, according to Mr. Syphers, to slow down the flow of storm water and clean motor oil runoff with the microbes that live in deep, dense root masses lining man-made swales, rather than deal with the constricted flow and expense of laying drainable pipe.

Codding is participating in the LEED-ND pilot and seeking certification under the Commercial Interiors rating system for 30,000 square feet of business incubator space already on the property.

In addition to the pilot program, North Street is seeking gold-level certification for Shiloh Sustainable Village under the Core and Shell and New Construction LEED rating systems, according to partner Jake Whiteley. The project would have 64,000 square feet of retail space anchored by Village Markets as well as 80 condominiums.

Because the site doesn't have wetlands or protected species, the developers are earning ND points via tenant selection, allowing employees and residents of the development to take care of most of their needs without driving around. What's more the partners are entertaining letters of intent for dry cleaners, restaurants and grocery stores that use organic or local ingredients as much as possible.

"When you're dealing with national tenants you can impose only certain criteria, but we've found that if you have solutions that won't throw them off track they are open to them," Mr. Whiteley said.

The comprehensive and contextual elements of LEED-ND suggest the rating system could be a good fit for cities that want to include some level of that certification as part of their green-building ordinances, according to Ms. Fisher. However, the mechanics of how a city would use LEED-ND, such as with a specific plan or the projects within it, still need to be worked out.

She suggests a carrot rather than a stick.

"Right now, it's incentive-based, so if you meet the standards of LEED-ND of your part of a specific plan you will get to build another story or have speedier project processing," she said.

Sebastopol has been exploring such a reward-based approach that could be part of a green-building ordinance.