

'Green'-built marina sees long-term payback

San Diego's Sun Harbor says it already is registering savings on its water and electrical costs

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A San Diego marina has become the first in the country to receive certification from a nonprofit organization that promotes environmentally conscious building.

Sun Harbor Marina received its LEED certification in June from the U.S. Green Building Council, founded in 1993. LEED stands for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design.

"I've always been an environmental activist," said Mary Lou LoPreste, the former owner who spearheaded the reconstruction project on the 73-year-old marina. "I felt like this was my opportunity to absolutely do the right thing ... so my grandbabies and great-grandbabies and children can enjoy the same things I've enjoyed."

LoPreste worked on the project for two years, and said it cost about \$5.2 million to renovate and reconstruct the 101-slip, 20,000-square-foot-marina. The cost for "green" building, she esti-

ated, is about 5 to 10 percent above regular building costs.

However, those extra costs will be recouped in five to 10 years just from savings on energy costs, water and other items that now require less of an

outlay, she said. LoPreste said she got a couple of small grants to help defray the cost, including one from San Diego Gas and Electric.

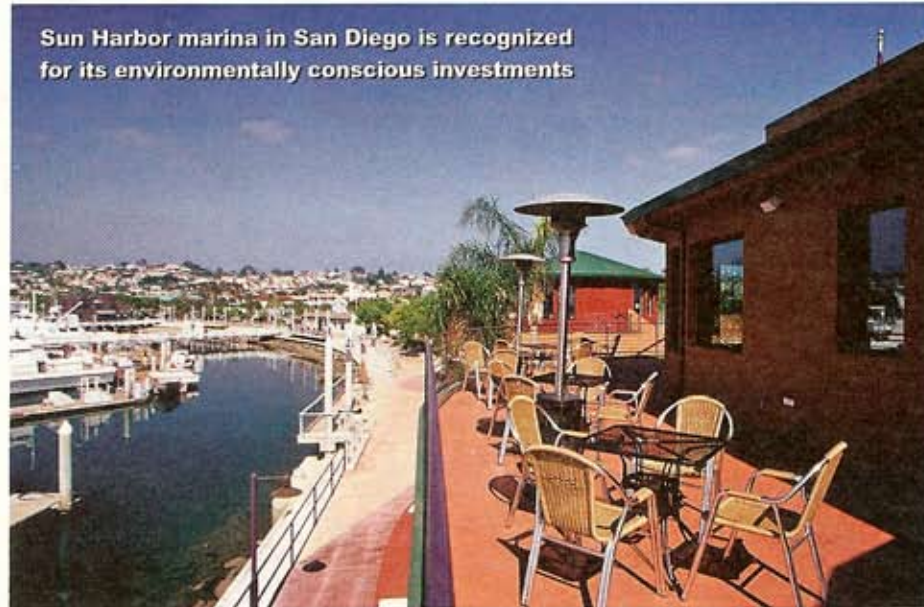
"I can't tell you how harmonious and beautiful the whole place feels," said

LoPreste, who owned the marina for 23 years and continues to work there on a consulting basis. "Every step is taken to make sure the facility is built with sustainable and healthy products."

The marina also has received an EARTH (Environmental Action and Restoration That Helps) award from the city of San Diego and has been recognized by the states of California and Washington for its efforts. In addition, it was designated a clean marina by California in December 2005.

LoPreste said there are dozens of ways the marina was made environmentally friendly, including:

- All paints are free of toxicity and chemicals;
- The flooring is rapidly renewable, which means it's made of bamboo and kirei;
- Insulation comes from recycled blue jeans;
- Tankless water heaters, waterless urinals and low-flush toilets were installed;
- Benches were made with reclaimed



lumber — wood that's already been cut;

- The parking lot includes light colored concrete, in addition to asphalt, to decrease the "heat island" effect;

- There's a system in place to keep the lighting at the same level all day so lights aren't turned on and off repeatedly; and
- Light shelves help reflect natural sunlight further into rooms, reducing the need for electricity.

LoPreste estimated that water usage has already been reduced by 37 percent and electrical use by 39 percent.

"I am extremely proud of my team," she said. "It's been the trip of a lifetime. It's been such a great education. There's so much the average individual can do."

What is LEED?

LEED, a voluntary system for developing sustainable buildings, was developed by the U.S. Green Building Council and launched in 2000, said Taryn Holowka, spokeswoman for the Washington, D.C.-based council.

"We really wanted something that was a common standard measurement for green," she said. "It's really a whole building approach. It focuses on everything from the site you build on to the energy to the water."

Holowka said the council looks at five criteria to determine a building's eligibility for certification. These are: The site where a building sits, water efficiency, energy use and effect on the at-

mosphere, materials used in building and indoor environmental quality.

Projects receive a certain number of points based on meeting the various elements of the five criteria. The highest number of points a project can receive is 69, and at least 26 points are needed for general certification.

The four levels of certification are: certified, silver, gold and platinum (the highest level).

There are 550 projects across the country that are LEED-certified, and about 4,500 more are in the process of gaining certification. About 20 projects have platinum level certification, Holowka said.

LEED, she said, was originally developed for new commercial construction, such as office buildings and high-rise residential buildings. However, it has evolved in the last six years and all sorts of buildings, including hospitals, retail stores and even airline terminals, are gaining certification.

As for Sun Harbor, Holowka said she hopes it will lead to more marinas seeking the certification.

"This marina will showcase that it looks like any other marina, but it's so much more energy efficient, it's using much less water, the people that are working here and the community that's using it are so much healthier," she

said. "This is something that every building can do; this is something that every building should be doing."

LoPreste, who plans to go into "green" consulting to help other marinas achieve this status, said she's heard from some developers in Mexico who want help building a "green" marina. Also, she said, Sun Harbor has been featured in many newspaper and magazine articles and that should help get the word out about environmentally friendly buildings.

"(LEED certification) is a really, really tough thing to get; it takes a lot of commitment and a lot of legwork," she said. "We were so stoked (to receive it), we were beyond belief happy."

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