



## The new business environment

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MARK MORAN / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER David Selingo stands outside his Kingston law office, which won the Environmental Enhancement Award for its green design.

Green is the new color for businesses.

More businesses are going green to improve the environment, lower energy costs and stay in the black.

At the law offices of attorneys David Selingo and Carl Guagliardo in Kingston, the 18 solar panels on the building's white roof produce energy. Window coatings and shades, energy recovery ventilation, energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems and recyclable building materials are integrated in the building's design.

"If we're not using energy, it goes back into the grid," Mr. Selingo said. "We want to make sure everything we have now is here in years to come and to make it even better than it is now and clean up the environment."

The building, owned by Shazaam Realty, recently won the Environmental Enhancement Award at the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business and Industry's annual business awards luncheon for its energy-saving design and materials. The energy savings aspects accounted for only 10 percent of construction costs, and there will be cost savings over time, Mr. Selingo said.

The building offers a glimpse into what's ahead for green construction. With electricity rates poised to soar 30 to 40 percent in January when PPL rate caps are lifted, several other area businesses also are finding unique ways to be more energy efficient.

In the Northeast Veterinary Referral Hospital in Plains Twp., countertops are made from compressed sunflower seed hulls. The floors consist of recyclable content. Low-VOC, or volatile organic compound, paint was used.

The building, owned by Dr. Kirk Hassinger and Dr. Doug Ayers and completed last year, was constructed primarily with concrete and steel on a brownfield site formerly filled with rubble.

It has "super-efficient" heating and cooling systems, Dr. Ayers said. The parking lots are gravel, and water runs off into wetlands instead of the Susquehanna River, he said. The energy-efficient improvements only added 5 percent to the construction cost, he said.

"It helps everybody. The less water we put in the river, more places like Shickshinny should appreciate us," Dr. Ayers said. "We feel like it is our responsibility as citizens on this planet to do what's right."

Among the other businesses minimizing their carbon footprint and saving resources, Sandone Tire in Scranton recycles oil from oil changes to heat the building and uses natural light to reduce electricity requirements. Rencavage Auto Collision in Moosic has invested in more environmentally friendly, waterborne paint.

McCarthy Tire Service is switching to more energy-efficient lights at its 29 locations in an effort to reduce its electricity consumption, said vice president Neil Horn. In the Wilkes-Barre location alone, McCarthy Tire was able to lower energy costs for lighting by 47 percent, Mr. Horn said.

Geisinger Health System has expanded green efforts at all its new facilities throughout Northeastern and Central Pennsylvania by implementing recycling and energy conservation programs.

A key recognition of a building's green features is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification from the U.S. Green Building Council, which measures how well a building or community implements energy- and resource-savings programs and improves indoor and outdoor environmental quality.

Completed Geisinger LEED projects include the Henry Hood Center for Health Research in Danville and Gray's Woods in State College. Geisinger also is seeking LEED certification at its critical care building, the Frank M. and Dorothea Henry Cancer addition and the Hospital for Advance Medicine in Danville once that facility opens early next year.

Brian Oram, owner of BF Environmental Consultants in Dallas, an educator and head of the water-quality lab at Wilkes University, said on the surface, the new buzz words "going green" create new marketing, promotional and public relations opportunities for companies as well as their brand, image and business. Going green helps businesses to distinguish themselves from the competition, he said.

In the long term, however, Mr. Oram stressed that going green means reducing waste, making businesses more efficient, reducing health care costs, liabilities, long-term operational costs and creating a product or service that is growing in demand.

"At the heart of this movement is changing over to practices that are more efficient by reducing consumption, recycling products and reusing by-products," Mr. Oram said. "Besides the socio-economic benefits of going green and similar programs, the primary benefit of going green for your business is to reduce the long-term base operational and maintenance cost for your business."

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