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## BUSINESS

### What it means to build green

Environmentally friendly building practices gain notice

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When architect Mike Smith sits down with a commercial or residential client these days, he often gets questions about a conc building practices.

"There is a keen interest in it because the concept is becoming more mainstream; business people know they just can't slap a financial or environmental," said Smith, who works at Zervas Group Architects.

While business owners and developers are generally on board with the concept of using building practices that lessen the im of uncertainty that scares them: the upfront cost of going green. Going green can add thousands of dollars to a project, forc beginning of a project are worth the long-term benefits.

"There is a balancing act taking place where developers are deciding how green they want a building to be and how much the which makes it challenging for developers who want to do the right thing but must stay within a budget," said Rick Dubrow, o uses green building practices on residential homes and commercial remodels.

Locally, public buildings started employing green building practices first, but the private sector is now starting to forge ahead. building, which was recently completed and is awaiting a gold standard Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LE that plan to have LEED certification include the Community Food Co-op in north Bellingham (seeking silver certification) and : currently under construction near Bellingham Cold Storage (seeking silver certification).

With its gold LEED certification, the WECU building is considered a breakthrough for private building design, said Philip Buri, op.

"I believe our project and others that will follow really benefited from WECU being the first to have a private firm going after LE really paved the way in terms of working with the city, in terms of permits and figuring out what needed to be done."

Derek Long of Sustainable Connections agreed, saying he's seen a lot of momentum in the past 18 months, with more privat sponsors an annual Green Building Conference each fall.

"Business owners have a better understanding about the benefits that come with green building practices, especially in terms been enough studies done that prove there are significant future savings that it helps ease concerns about the higher initial c to accept, because not enough is known on what the benefits are, both financially and environmentally."

## BALANCING COSTS

How green a building should be is something the Community Food Co-op wrestled with when planning for its second store, B is expected to begin this summer.

"There is a trade-off that you have to consider when planning for this," Buri said. "We wanted to go for gold or platinum certifi budget that it just wasn't possible."

A national study completed in 2004, "Costing Green: A Comprehensive Cost Database and Budgeting Methodology," by the c significant cost increases the higher the standard of a project.

The study looked at the cost of 45 LEED buildings in six different climate areas in the U.S. and found that there was an additi starting budget for silver certification, a 2.7 to 6.3 percent increase for gold certification and a 7.8 to 10.3 percent increase for Green Building Council Web site ( [www.usgbc.org](http://www.usgbc.org), then click the resource link followed by the research link). Buri expects the gold to decrease with time, as new technology becomes more readily available. For now, the silver rating is an important leve environmental and financial benefits, but for the store's customer base.

"We conducted surveys of our membership to find out what they wanted in a new store, and they listed green building practic strongly in favor of this, and it just makes good business sense to listen to your customers."

The gold and platinum standards are being embraced in other parts of the country, said Mark Buehrer, director for 2020 Engi



