

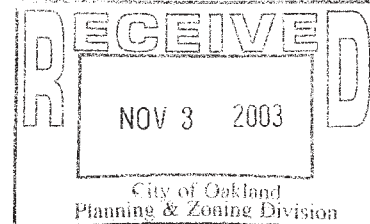
URBAN ECOLOGY



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November 3, 2003

Lynn Warner, Planner IV
City of Oakland
Community and Economic Development Agency
Planning Division
250 Frank Ogawa Plaza, Suite 3330
Oakland, CA 94612



Dear Ms. Warner:

In 1998, the Oakland City Council adopted a Sustainable Community Development Initiative, with the goal of promoting social equity, environmental responsibility, and economic vitality in City and private projects. At the heart of downtown Oakland, the Uptown Mixed Use Project will bring more than 2,500 new residents to an area now characterized by parking lots. Ensuring that Uptown is developed sustainably would demonstrate the City's ongoing commitment to these principles.

In the Uptown draft environmental impact report, the developers note that as an infill, transit-oriented project, Uptown is consistent with Oakland's Sustainable Development Initiative. This is certainly true. However, Urban Ecology believes that the EIR and Uptown Partners should make a specific and verifiable commitment toward employing environmentally sustainable building and design techniques.

Urban Ecology has prepared a list of six low-cost or no-cost strategies that can significantly reduce construction-related waste and improve the quality of life for future residents of Uptown. In addition, these techniques are logical means for the developers to mitigate significant environmental impacts of the project, particularly in relation to air pollution, water quality, hazardous materials, and aesthetic resources.

The current Uptown proposal has improved significantly since it was first introduced. While it is important to move the project along, it is equally important to make sure it is done right. Urban Ecology believes that a greener Uptown will benefit everyone, and we hope that resource-efficient building strategies will be incorporated into the final EIR.

Sincerely,

Nathan James

6 Steps Towards a Greener Uptown

“Green Buildings” are structures that are built, renovated, operated, or reused in an ecological and resource-efficient manner. They are a major contribution to improving environmental sustainability and they can be used in the marketing and public relations effort for new development. Employing green building techniques in a prominent project like the Uptown development is a powerful way to demonstrate the City of Oakland’s commitment to sustainability. Using these six no-cost or low-cost strategies would significantly reduce waste and toxicity for the City of Oakland and improve the quality of life of the new residents of Uptown:

1. Reduce Water Usage for Landscaping by 50%

Reducing water consumption reduces maintenance expenses as well as decreasing the strain on California’s fragile water resources. By specifying plant species with low water needs that are appropriate for Northern California’s dry climate, Forest City could significantly reduce water used for landscaping and the amount of pollutants that run off into Bay Area water streams. Another landscape strategy that effectively reduces water consumption and costs is the installation of highly efficient drip irrigation systems.

2. Use Low-Emitting Building Materials

Poor indoor air quality, caused by the offgassing of chemicals found in many building materials, contributes to high levels of respiratory disease in American children. Specifying low-emitting and formaldehyde-free paint, wood finishes, adhesives, sealants, insulation, carpets, and boards decreases the amount of toxic compounds in the air of the homes of future Uptown residents. Forest City should demonstrate to the City of Oakland that it plans to incorporate these low-emitting materials in the Uptown Development.

3. Exceed Title 24 Energy Standards by 15%

Although California’s Title 24 energy performance standards are some of the strongest in the nation, the City of Oakland supports development projects that exceed these standards. Improving energy efficiency is an economically effective choice for the residents of the new Uptown development: lowering utility expenses allows tenants to enjoy minimized financial burdens for years to come. There is a wide range of techniques that improve energy efficiency, but first steps usually involve adding wall and ceiling insulation, installing double-glazed or low-emissivity (low-E) windows, and upgrading to efficient household appliances. Other options to consider include plumbing for natural gas heating, providing hard-wiring for compact fluorescent light bulbs, and adding overhangs to south-facing windows. The Uptown project could be even more energy efficient with the installation of solar water heaters and photovoltaic panels.

4. Divert 75% of Construction Waste from Landfills

Construction waste, such as wood, drywall, metal, concrete, dirt, and cardboard, fill millions of cubic feet of California’s landfills each year. Managing this construction waste can be as simple as identifying the types and quantities of waste that will be available and contacting local recycling facilities, youth build programs, or community build groups (like Habitat for Humanity) to identify the conditions required for recycling or donating construction materials. Generally, space at the construction site also needs to be allocated for recycling collection.

5. Use Recycled Content Materials for Construction

Four common ways to incorporate recycled construction materials in a project are: re-using form boards when pouring concrete, using recycled content siding (“hardboard”), using concrete with flyash, and using recycled content rubble for backfill around building foundations. Additionally, many interior building materials like gypsum board, linoleum flooring, and carpeting are now produced with recycled content. On a related note, the substitution of engineered lumber for solid sawn lumber significantly decreases a building’s impact on the Bay Area’s old growth forests, since engineered lumber uses smaller-diameter and faster-growing plantation trees. Forest City should demonstrate its commitment to sustainability for the City of Oakland by resolving to specify recycled content materials in the Uptown Development.

6. Provide Views and Natural Daylighting in 75% of Indoor Spaces

Giving Uptown residents access to natural light and views will dramatically improve their quality of life, and also reduce their energy demands, since they will less often need to turn on electric lights. Effective daylighting strategies often include skylights and clerestory windows, which provide natural light from above, and vertically-oriented windows, which offer an even distribution of light across a room.

Notes and Further Resources

Goal 1: Reduce Water Usage for Landscaping by 50%

- a. The East Bay Municipal Utility District publishes *Water Conserving Plants and Landscapes for the Bay Area*, an award-winning resource for selecting drought-tolerant plants. For a copy, send \$15 to EBMUD Water Conservation Division, 2130 Adeline Street, Oakland, CA 94607-4240.

Goal 2: Use Low-Emitting Building Materials

- a. The "Green Seal" program is an independent, non-profit certification system for green building products. They produce and regularly update lists of low-emitting paints and coatings, and offer investigative reports about particleboard, fiberboard, and lighting fixtures. These lists and reports can be found at <http://www.greenseal.org/>

Goal 3: Exceed Title 24 Energy Standards by 15%

- a. More information about California's Title 24 Standards can be found at <http://www.energy.ca.gov/title24/index.html>
- b. The City of Oakland's Energy Efficient Design (EEDA) Program offers free assistance in energy reduction for new construction projects. Contact Christine Vance at (510) 482-4420 or see www.oaklandenergypartnership.com for more details.

Goal 4: Divert 75% of Construction Waste from Landfills

- a. To obtain a building permit for new construction in Oakland, applicants are required to submit a Waste Reduction & Recycling Plan (WRRP) that demonstrates how the project will reuse or recycle 50% or more of all construction and demolition debris.
- b. Many Bay Area developers find that recycling construction waste ends up costing less than the transportation and dumping fees to take it to landfills on the urban fringe.
- c. Projects that deliver loads to facilities that are specifically designed to receive, sort, and recycle mixed construction and demolition debris are eligible for a \$10/ton rebate from the Alameda County Waste Management Authority. Contact Tom Padia at (510) 614-1699 or tpadia@stopwaste.org for further details.
- d. For more information, contact Patrick Hayes, Recycling Specialist at the City of Oakland Public Works Department, at (510) 238-6920 or phayes@oaklandnet.com

Goal 5: Use Recycled Content Materials for Construction

- a. The State of California Integrated Waste Management Board maintains a list of recycled-content building materials. The searchable database, along with other reference materials, is available for free at <http://www.ciwmb.ca.gov/condemo/>
- b. The Alameda County Waste Management Authority maintains a list of locally available green building materials, http://www.stopwaste.org/Resource_Guide.pdf

Goal 6: Provide Natural Daylighting in 75% of Indoor Spaces

- a. The California Public Utilities Commission's Energy Design Resources program offers many resources to help with designing for daylight. See <http://www.energydesignresources.com> for more information.

The City of Oakland's Sustainability Coordinator offers free technical assistance programs to help implement these or other green building strategies. For more information, please contact Carol Misseldine at (510) 238-6808 or cmiseldine@oaklandnet.com

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