An eco-conscious city

Costa Mesa *is setting the bar for sustainable building.*
by Ashley Eliot

Ever wonder how your business can engage in sustainable practices?

One tried-and-true method: Your company can become more earth-friendly by utilizing a solar-powered system. A second strategy: sustainable building – including the installation of energy-efficient heating and cooling systems, the addition of solar panels and the use of recycled building materials.

One local municipality, Costa Mesa, is leading the way in the green effort by helping residents, businesses and public agencies within the city limits implement *both* strategies. The man spearheading the program is Knanh Nguyen.

"The electricity that we consume comes from coal-burning power plants, which produces by-products that are not good for the environment and contribute to global warming," Nguyen says. "Solar panels promote clean energy and reduce the need for coal energy."

Going on his fourth year with the city, Nguyen is an International Code Council-certified building official and plans examiner, and a Build It Green-certified building professional. He's currently working on enforcing Costa Mesa's new green building code, which is expected to go into effect in 2011. And he has plenty of advice for business owners.

"First, focus on conservation," he says. "Second, make low-cost improvements, such as switching to compact fluorescent lamps and weather-sealed openings. Add insulation and switch old appliances to newer, efficient ones. Third, invest in renewable energy."

Through Costa Mesa's Build Green Incentive Program, city residents can waive permit fees for a variety of environmentally friendly installations, through June 30.

On a personal note, Nguyen points out an underlying factor in maintaining green-related systems in his own home: his 6-month-old baby boy: "I wanted our son, Bill, to start out on the right foot – no carbon footprint."

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