



PHOTO FROM DAVID BALBER



PHOTO BY WILL STAMER



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IT'S EASY BUILDING GREEN

By Jamie Goldberg, NKBA, AKBD

Less-is-more. Earthy. Zen-like. Humane. Imaginative. These all are terms David Balber uses to describe his style. The Tampa-based architect designs homes and commercial buildings, educating his clients in the process about the best in environmentally friendly building practices.

"There are countless ways to make buildings more efficient and sustainable these days," Balber says. "It's just a question of figuring out what makes sense for a particular project and budget."

When it came to remodeling his office space in 2006, Balber was able to combine the imaginative and the earthy into an environmentally friendly workplace that looks — and works — great. "When I moved into my current Carrollwood office, I basically had to gut the entire interior because it did not function as I needed it to," he says.

Balber and his contractor used low VOC (chemical-emitting) paints and chemicals where they could, koa wood from sustainable forests, scrap granite tiles that would otherwise have cluttered landfills and a strikingly handsome barnyard door on a reclaimed track system.

He even made the floor plan greener by shifting all the work areas toward the single window wall of the suite. Daylight not only creates more brightness in a space, Balber notes, "It also creates a more humane working environment for me and my staff." Thanks to his green remodel, Balber and his team

enjoy cleaner air, better light and a healthier work environment.

He brings these and more eco-friendly concepts to his clients' projects as well, and is finding a very receptive audience these days. "Often a client will suggest green products before I even have a chance to bring the topic up," he says. Though some products cost more in the initial building phase, they save in energy, replacement cost and health benefits over the life of the building, Balber says.

"Each sustainable concept yields a different projected savings. I would say that by simply positioning a building properly on a site, the project can provide close to a 30-percent energy savings, if not more." As he noted in his office project, placing windows where they'll capture maximum daylight also increases the environmental benefits of the project.

"...by simply positioning a building properly on a site, the project can provide close to a 30-percent energy savings, if not more," says Balber.

Where artificial light is required, energy-friendly options including LED and compact fluorescents will yield greater benefits than the once common incandescent. Energy Star-rated appliances also are a ▶

Executive assistant Kathryn Fuller sees many pleasantly surprised faces as clients enter Balber's unique office space.

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Balber suggests several eco-sensitive tips for new construction or remodeling plans, including using drought-tolerant, native plants in landscaping to save water.

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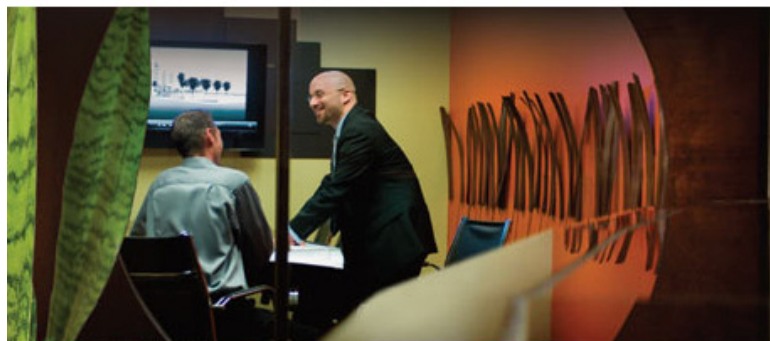
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Design Team





Barber meets with a client in the conference room, where modern nuances meet more organic décor, such as the dried and cut leaves along the wall.

The reflective foreground hints at a counter top created from scrapped pieces of granite.

homeowner's best choice for energy savings.

Barber suggests these eco-sensitive tips for your new construction or remodeling plans:

- Choose carpet tiles that can be replaced individually when stained, rather than covering a whole room with rolled carpet;
- Use drought-tolerant, native plants in your landscaping to save on water use;
- Consider solar panels which, though they'll add more to your building cost, will reduce your long-term energy bills;
- Build with more durable materials such as quartz counter tops instead of laminate that will last far longer and probably never need replacing.

"There are so many possibilities in the field," Barber says. "My hope is that in upcoming years, governments will mandate that new construction incorporates (environmentally friendly building concepts). That will cause a chain reaction that ultimately results in a more livable planet for future generations." ■

Jamie Goldberg, NKBA, ARBD, designs kitchens and bathrooms for builders and homeowners in the greater Tampa Bay area. She can be reached at kitchenstyle@verizon.net or (813) 810-0467.

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