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University 'building green'

IUSB may seek 'sustainable' housing.

By MARGARET FOSMOE
Tribune Staff Writer

SOUTH BEND -- Student apartments to be built next year at Indiana University South Bend might contain rooftop gardens, environmentally friendly building materials and porous parking lots designed to encourage natural drainage.

It's all part of "building green."

A faculty committee is working with administrators and architects to encourage the notion of incorporating sustainable design into the planned housing. The apartments will be built along the south bank of the St. Joseph River west of Ironwood Drive.

Having taken root among municipalities and business, sustainability is now a hot trend in academia. Across the country, many colleges and universities are taking steps to save money and energy and reduce use of nonrenewable resources.

IU Bloomington recently signed on to a "climate challenge" to reduce campus emissions of carbon dioxide. Other colleges have opened buildings with grassy rooftops, low-flow showers and solar cells to generate power.

Forum on clean energy slated for Nov. 11

SOUTH BEND -- "Tapping into Income Opportunities in Clean Energy" will be the topic of a free forum from 9 a.m. to noon Nov. 11 at the St. Joseph County Public Library, 304 S. Main St.

The forum will feature speakers discussing wind power, renewable electricity, saving money through energy efficiency and the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification program.

To make a reservation, visit the Web site www.indianacleanpower.org or call Steve Aker at (812) 249-3741 or Jesse Kharbanda at (210) 216-1121.

The forum is sponsored by the Indiana Coalition for Renewable Energy and Economic Development.

"It promotes a greater awareness of how our everyday decisions impact not only our own lives, but the lives of other people," said Deb Marr, an IUSB professor of biological sciences and chair of the campus sustainability committee.

The new IUSB apartments could be designed with windows placed to catch the most sun, to reduce reliance on artificial light, Marr said.

Professor Mike Keen and about 20 colleagues from a variety of disciplines founded the committee last spring in an effort to spread the word about the benefits of sustainable design. The housing issue is the committee's first big project.

IUSB identifies an annual campus theme for discussion and study. For 2007-2008, the campus theme will be "sustainable communities."

So far, the committee has met with architects from The Troyer Group of Mishawaka, the firm designing the apartment complex. They've discussed using porous materials for the parking lot to reduce runoff into the river, using native plants to provide a natural filter system and buying bamboo or other fast-growing wood for flooring, Marr said.

Chancellor Una Mae Reck has been very supportive of the committee's efforts, Marr said.

The immediate benefits of sustainability are savings in energy costs, Marr said. Cost will be a factor. "In order for it to be sustainable, it has to be economically feasible," she said.

Building projects that qualify can receive Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design certification from the U.S. Green Building Council.

"Building green" may not be feasible for the entire IUSB apartment project, which will include multiple buildings. Perhaps the university will plan and seek certification for the community building and one apartment building, Marr said.

In this region, sustainability is just starting to catch on, said Bill Barnard, an architect and project major with Troyer Group, which has eight LEED-certified employees. Barnard is chair of the U.S. Green Building Council's Indiana chapter.

Troyer designed a "green" library addition under construction at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart. The addition incorporates window placement to maximize use of natural light, native landscaping and a rain garden that will retain all water runoff on site, Barnard said.

Sustainable architecture can involve choosing building materials containing low-volatile compounds and placing most windows on the north and south, he said.

"The goal is to transform the entire building industry so it is less expensive," Barnard said.

Staff writer Margaret Fosmoe:

mfosmoe@sbtinfo.com

(574) 235-6329

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