

ENVIRONMENT

Green building store is already growing

Success seen as proof of public's interest

By Casey Newton
Scottsdale Republic

SCOTTSDALE—For the new Pilates studio she was building in her Fountain Hills home, Dorothy Velasco wanted to create the healthiest environment possible.

But environmentally friendly products can be hard to find in mainstream home improvement stores, and Velasco didn't have access to the Web.

Then, Velasco met Jeffery Frost, who was about to open the Valley's first green-building supply store.

A few months later, Velasco installed non-toxic, recycled rubber flooring in her studio.

The flooring came from a.k.a. Green, the Scottsdale retail outlet Frost opened this summer with his partner, Mick Dalrymple, at 4408 N. Miller Road.

The store's opening and early success are testaments to the size of the Valley's growing green-building movement, which is moving slowly into the mainstream of residential and commercial construction.

While the green-materials industry is small now, advocates hope to make it a growing part of the nation's home-improvement market, which accounts for more than \$233 billion annually in consumer

More information

a.k.a. Green
4408 N. Miller Road, Suite 101
(480) 946-9600
info@akagreen.com
www.akagreen.com/

environment, in the Valley and beyond.

"Even if we can make one little percent change in how homes are built," Dalrymple said, "it can make a huge change in the built environment."

Future hopes

The store has won high marks from Scottsdale officials, who encouraged Frost and Dalrymple to locate here.

"It's a great resource for us here at the city," said Anthony Floyd, who directs Scottsdale's 7-year-old green-building program.

By showcasing products many builders haven't seen before, Floyd said, a.k.a. Green helps to educate consumers about environmentally sensitive design.

"If they've never seen something like a dual-flush toilet, now I can point them there," he said, referring to water-conserving commodes. "I don't have to show them a picture or give them literature. I can say, go on down to a.k.a. Green. They have one on the floor."

After just a few months in the 1,800-square-foot space,



Elizabeth Taddiken, an urban horticulture student at ASU, talks to Mick Dalrymple of a.k.a. Green about the materials he sells in his store.

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commercial construction.

While the green-materials industry is small now, advocates hope to make it a growing part of the nation's home-improvement market, which accounts for more than \$233 billion annually in consumer spending, an amount that has grown by more than 50 percent in the past decade.

Last year in Scottsdale, 56 builders participated in the city's green-building program, 27 more than participated in 2003. Scottsdale issued 253 green permits last year, up from 43 the year before.

And the retail store has given city officials a place to send curious developers who want to build green but don't know how.

"This was great for me," said Velasco, whose previous environmental efforts were limited mostly to recycling. "It's an exercise space, and I just wanted it to be as healthy as possible. (The store) takes the work out of it for the consumer."

Recycled inspiration

At a.k.a. Green, half the fun is learning what the products on display used to be.

A chunk of insulation is made from recycled denim. A section of flooring contains bits of tire and Air Jordans. The tiles feature reconstituted aircraft windshields.

The store's answer to the formaldehyde-heavy construction staple MDF, or medium-density fiber board, is a product made up of compressed sunflower seeds.

Another product, Counterfeit Green, offers buyers a chance to create countertops out of recycled dollar bills.

"This is even better than granite," said Elizabeth Tadden, an Arizona State University student who came to the store this week to hear Dalrymple lecture on green-building strategies. She marveled at the recycled-money counter-

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After just a few months in the 1,800-square-foot space, which sits in a shopping center next to a Sunflower Market, the partners are already talking of moving to a bigger space.

"We're already outgrowing it," Dalrymple said this week at the store. "We're probably going to double in size."

"I think we're going to be fine. There's just a huge interest in this right now," Dalrymple said. "Someday, a year from now, maybe we'll even make a salary."

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for 12 r
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A green catalyst

Frost and Dalrymple had each considered opening a green-building store for years and were working on the idea independently when a mutual friend, who owns a similar shop in Tucson, introduced them. The partners' store had its grand opening in August.

Originally from Michigan, Frost, 31, is an architect in training who spent two summers learning at Taliesin. Dalrymple, 40, is a Tucson native with a background in screenwriting, film production, advertising and technology consulting.

Both want Valley residents to incorporate more environmentally friendly floors, roofs, tiles and paints into their homes.

"We want to be a catalyst," Frost said.

The partners acknowledge that building a "green" home can add 5 to 10 percent to the cost of a project. But some of those costs can be recouped later through water- and energy-conserving devices, many of which are for sale at the store.

The ultimate goal is reduce the environmental impact that construction has on the natural