

Graceful Lifestyles™ Goes Green for Corporate America

Going Green is all the rage these days, but for Graceful Lifestyles Designers, it is a seamless marriage between two design perspectives. Keeping in line with the Tao, bringing balance to the indoors and listening to the wisdom of the earth is our fundamental philosophy. Corporate America has shifted its awareness towards the environment and recognizes the importance of well-being and sustainability. The US Green Building Council who spearheads this surge of corporate interest by providing a certification system called LEED, Leadership in Energy and Environmental Development to all construction projects that qualify.

When Mary Dennis, executive director of The School of Graceful Lifestyles™, was asked to lead a project for a corporate client as a Feng Shui Intentional Designer and assist them in getting it LEED Certified, she said absolutely! She saw it as a wonderful opportunity to showcase Feng Shui Design as an eco-conscious design leader and teacher. With her team of Feng Shui Designers, Bridgett Driggers and Shauna Piscitello, Graceful Lifestyles™ took on over 30,000 square feet for a pilot program of all future projects for this internationally well-known vacation ownership company.

As Feng Shui Design Consultants we know the first and most important step is to set an intention. Going forward with the common goal of choosing products that are considered green guard certified and energy star rated will keep you on track during the decision making process. Do your research and you will find that going green is much easier to do these days then it was 10 years ago. We are fortunate to have more resources available and are affordable. Corporate clients are going to be focused on the bottom-line, this concept will challenge you to be creative and require you to educate yourself on what alternatives are available. Companies like SteelCase and Herman Miller design office furniture that is made from recyclable content and assembled with less toxic materials. Also consider where your products are coming from. Using local materials and suppliers save the environment from excessive carbon emissions used for transport.

As mentioned earlier, cost effective design will be a priority. Looking at ways to save your corporate clients money on energy costs is a primary focus. Designing to allow natural light to illuminate as much of the space as possible is key. Utilize energy efficient light bulbs or better yet, solar lighting where feasible and optimize indoor air quality.

Education is a key component to our services as Graceful Lifestyles™ Feng Shui

Designers. We provide educational classes on what has been implemented into the workspace. Informing everyone in the office of the intention and the materials that have been used is crucial for the success of our projects. Time and instruction is given to the maintenance department on eco-friendly cleaning supplies and toxins that are used in conventional products. Personnel must also know how to recycle, what can and cannot be recycled and then provide bins in convenient locations.

This is an exciting time for Feng Shui Designers to be leaders in a positive movement for change in conventional design practices. We can use our compassion and wisdom for the laws of nature to educate and create beautiful, timeless environments. Understanding the Person Place Connection brings success to the corporate environment!

Please stay tuned for future articles from Graceful Lifestyles™ during the construction and completion phase of our current corporate project. We look forward to sharing the success of the final stages with you.

Green Design

The School of Graceful Lifestyles is committed to educating the public about healthy alternatives for the home and office. Green Design (also called Sustainable Design) effectively uses solutions that encourage our coexistence with nature.

Since the mid 1940s, thousands of chemicals have been introduced into our lives. Rachel Carson, author of *Silent Spring*, was one of the pioneers who documented the dangers of DDT in 1962. The potential for creating hazardous environments becomes extremely high when these chemicals are intermingled and compounds are formed. In 1996, the book, *Our Stolen Future*, brought world-wide attention to scientific discoveries about endocrine disruption and the fact that common contaminants can interfere with the natural signals controlling development of the fetus. Organochlorines (compounds containing chlorine) mimic estrogen in the body and are now found in everything from PVC to plastics to dry cleaning fluids. Unfortunately, in 2005, we are still grappling with the same issues of environmental toxicity and how to make our homes safer.

One of the best ways to minimize our exposure is to become informed, and make choices that limit the introduction of these deadly chemicals into our spaces. The following are some suggestions for a “Green Sofa”:

- Fabric – Select organic, natural fiber textiles such as cotton, wool or hemp. Be

sure to ask if the fabric has been treated for stain resistance or if a fire retardant has been applied. Both of these applications contain formaldehyde which is a known thyroid disrupter.

- Wood – Sustainably harvested wood can now be determined by a label from the Forest Stewardship Council. Stay clear of particleboard or pressed wood as it also contains formaldehyde.
- Cushions – Choose natural, nontoxic latex. The more commonly used polyurethane foam outgases many chemicals.

Look for more Green Design tips from Graceful Lifestyles in future editions of the Grapevine. Learn how to choose wall coverings, floorings, and fabrics that promote healthy living. Once we begin to accept only Green Products, the manufacturers will begin to supply them. Learn to speak passionately about your desire and intention to restore the balance to Mother Earth, for we are one with her.