



November  
2006

Volume 13  
Issue 11

The eNewsletter of the Sustainable Building Coalition  
P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381 [www.greenbuilder.com/sbc](http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc)

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Texas
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SBC Calendar:

November 15

**Straw Bales Under Fire: The straw bale fire test and implications for insurance and mortgages.**  
By Bill Christiansen and Ben Obregon

December 1

**Holiday Party!**  
No Monthly Meeting or Newsletter.

November 15 SBC Monthly Meeting:

**Straw Bales Under Fire: The straw bale fire test and implications for insurance and mortgages**  
By Bill Christensen and Ben Obregon  
\*\*\*Plus special feature: A sampling of incredible slides from the 2006 International Straw Bale Building Conference\*\*\*



An important milestone in the field of straw bale building was recently achieved. Two types of straw bale walls were subjected to the rigorous national fire testing procedures, and both walls passed! At this month's meeting we will see a video and slides documenting the test and will learn about the implications regarding straw bale buildings and codes, insurance, and mortgaging. Both Bill Christensen and Ben Obregon were major participants in this nationally sponsored test, so they are well prepared to answer questions about the event.

We will also be treated to some seductive visual images from the recent 2006 International Straw Bale Building Conference held outside of Toronto. Straw bale builders from around the world assembled to discuss the state of straw bale building. Ben Obregon will share some of his images and talk about the state of the art in straw bale building around the world.



SBC meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 p.m. at Casa de Luz, 1701 Toomey Road, in the Cielo Room. You are welcome to join us before the meeting at 6:00 p.m. for a wonderful macrobiotic meal at Casa de Luz.  
[www.casadeluz.org](http://www.casadeluz.org)

Sustainable Tip of the Month

**More Fun, Less Stuff: For the Holidays and Life**

The Center for a New American Dream is a constituency of individuals who choose to live consciously, buy wisely, and make a difference. The group publishes a fun, easy to use book packed with practical tips on how to simplify your life, free up time, money, and personal energy, and protect the environment. (<http://www.newdream.org/publications/sk.php>) This book, **More Fun, Less Stuff Starter Kit**, suggests "Nine Actions" for consuming wisely, practical tips for having fun without having to buy anything, and lots of resources to help you continue on your path. Parents will want to check out **Four Steps to a More Meaningful, Less Commercialized Holiday—with Kids**. <http://www.newdream.org/newsletter/simpleholidaykids.php>



## Business Member Spotlight: GreenBuilder.com

**GreenBuilder.com** began in 1994 to bring the kind of information we were regularly sharing in Austin, at **Sustainable Building Coalition** meetings and through the **Austin Green Building Program**, to other areas via the internet. We soon entered into a partnership with the Austin Green Building Program, putting the Sustainable Building Sourcebook on the web before the program—or City of Austin—even had a web site. Still Austin-based, still independent, still sticking to a green agenda, GreenBuilder.com now offers a big pile of tools for green builders and anyone interested in sustainability and green practices.

The GreenBuilder.com **Green Building Professionals Directory** helps folks find the talent they need for building or rehab projects. In addition to a **Sourcebook** for Green and Sustainable Building, GreenBuilder.com has its own **online bookstore** covering the many shades of green building. **Willing Workers in Alternative Technology** ([greenbuilder.com/wwat/](http://greenbuilder.com/wwat/)) is a networking tool for people who want to intern or apprentice, and projects looking for them. The online Sustainable Building **Calendar** connects us with the ever-larger green community, showing workshops and conferences happening worldwide. GreenBuilder.com's recent project, the **International Strawbale Registry**, tracks straw bale construction performance post-occupancy and lists mortgage and insurance companies friendly to this way of building.

GreenBuilder.com also builds and/or hosts web sites and searchable databases for green, sustainably-minded folks like [StewardshipArchitecture.com](http://StewardshipArchitecture.com), [TheLastStraw.org](http://TheLastStraw.org), [CMPBS.org](http://CMPBS.org), [GreeningTheHeartland.com](http://GreeningTheHeartland.com), [NetworkEarth.org](http://NetworkEarth.org), [StrawBaleCentral.com](http://StrawBaleCentral.com), [TREIA.org](http://TREIA.org) (Texas Renewable Energy Industries Association), [WindCoalition.org](http://WindCoalition.org), [LincolnGreenBuildingGroup.com](http://LincolnGreenBuildingGroup.com), [BuildersWithoutBorders.org](http://BuildersWithoutBorders.org), [SolSourceArchitecture.com](http://SolSourceArchitecture.com), [StrawbaleCentral.com](http://StrawbaleCentral.com), [EnvironmentalDirectory.info](http://EnvironmentalDirectory.info), [RenewableEnergyRoundup.com](http://RenewableEnergyRoundup.com), [NaturalGardenerAustin.com](http://NaturalGardenerAustin.com), [StrawLocator.com](http://StrawLocator.com), and more.



**Bill Christensen**, owner and chief programmer of GreenBuilder.com, likes to point out that "we build web sites that you can edit and update yourself using your password and basic computer skills. No code! And you can use any computer to do this, as long as it's connected to the web. This lets you keep your site current as quickly and economically as possible."

Greenbuilder.com's donations to Sustainable Building Coalition include SBC's web site and two email discussion lists for SBC members and nonmembers.



## Call to Revitalize the Straw Bale Association of Texas

From Ben Obregon



I'm part of a group that will be organizing a National (or perhaps North American) organization of straw bale associations whose purpose will be to speak with a more powerful voice to the institutional and regulatory authorities (especially insurance companies) that are the linchpin to mainstream acceptance to straw bale construction. I feel that our state needs to have a voice on this issue. This can only be accomplished by a statewide organization. In addition, we have a large number of straw bale homes in Texas and immense interest in the process. Because of those reasons, because my children are now of an age that I can again make the time commitment to help in whatever way is needed, and mainly because of a reinvigoration from the international community, I propose that we "re-birth" the Straw Bale Association of Texas (SBAT). Anyone who is interested in either helping re-create the organization or in becoming a member after it is back in place can contact me at [sd1@austin.rr.com](mailto:sd1@austin.rr.com) with questions or to be put on a mailing list for the organization.

### **CALLING ALL BOOKWORMS!**

Do you like to read? I need a volunteer to help with ordering books pertaining to sustainability/green building. Specifically, a liaison to contact publishers or authors to inquire about their pricing and shipping procedures. Also a computer whiz kind of person to start a web page of our book titles and prices on our SBC website. Call me for details—Frieda at 512-490-8797. Please leave your name and telephone number.



## Austin Solar Rebate Increased as of October 2006

**On Tuesday, October 17, 2006, the Austin Resource Management Commission agreed to raise the city's Solar PV Rebate from \$4.00 to \$4.50 per watt effective Wednesday, October 18, 2006.**

The rebate change will be administered as follows:

- The increased rebate amount applies to all new site survey requests for Residential and Commercial projects (non-profits remain at \$4.50 per watt) received on or after October 18, 2006.
- All outstanding Letters of Intent will be elevated to \$4.50 per watt during the time of the final inspection. It is not necessary to resubmit a new rebate application, nor will a new Letter of Intent be issued. Effective October 18, 2006, new rebate applications can take advantage of the \$4.50 rebate.
- The Solar Rebate website will be updated to reflect the increased rebate level.

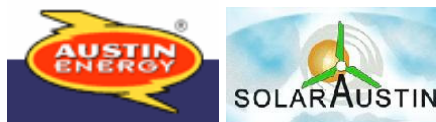
EXCEPTION: Commercial rebates \$47,000 and above already approved by City Council, will remain at the rebate amount as approved by Council.

For additional information, contact Austin Energy's Solar Rebate Program at (512) 482-5369.

For more information about all of Austin Energy's rebate and other energy efficiency programs, visit

<http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/index.htm>

For more information about additional solar energy resources in the Austin area, visit [www.solaraustin.org](http://www.solaraustin.org).



## Local Workshops



**Saturday, November 18, 2006**  
**South Austin Straw Bale Wall Raising**  
Contact Ben Obregon at [sd1@austin.rr.com](mailto:sd1@austin.rr.com) or  
Bill Rainey at [straw@mirmo.com](mailto:straw@mirmo.com) for more details.



**Thursday, December 7, 2006**  
**Austin Green Roof Market Development Symposium**  
Time: 8:30 a.m.—5:00 p.m., followed by a networking  
reception for all participants.  
**Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center**  
4801 La Crosse Avenue, Austin, Texas 78739



The **first extensive green roof in Austin**, Texas, was installed by the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center. The Wildflower Center was hired by Stratus Properties to install approximately 8,000 square feet of green roof over a retail shopping center at the corner of Escarpment and Slaughter Lane. The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is also conducting **green roof research** to study **native drought tolerant plant species** and creating an extensive green roof that has all the normal advantages of a green roof, but also maintains the regional character and natural heritage of the place where they exist. The research project will test the efficacy of native vegetation for use on extensive green roofs and clarify storm water retention rates, water quality, and thermal properties of green roofing for subtropical regions. The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to **learn from local and national experts** about the general design and implementation of green roofs. Local case studies will be featured and afternoon focus group sessions will allow attendees the chance to identify with relevant city officials the local research needs and obstacles to implementation. Input gathered from participants of this workshop will help guide the further development of **green roof policy** options in the Austin area. **Cost for this one-day workshop, lunch, and reception is \$195.00. Attendees also receive a complimentary one-year individual membership to Green Roofs for Healthy Cities. This membership includes two publications, a monthly e-newsletter, a listing in our Green Roof Professional Directory and more.**

**Who Should Attend:** *Landscape Architects • Architects • Horticulturists • Urban Planners • Roofing Consultants & Contractors • Building Developers, Owners and Managers • Environmental Scientists, Academics and Researchers • Policy Makers and EPA representatives*

**Green Roofs for Healthy Cities** is registered with the American Society of Landscape Architects, the American Institute of Architects, and the Roof Consultants Institute as a provider of Continuing Professional Education programs. This symposium is equivalent to **3.5 professional credits**. For more information and to register, visit [www.greenroofs.org](http://www.greenroofs.org) and click on the "Austin" link.

Note to vendors: **Trade Show Space** is still available! Interact directly with local representatives showcasing the latest in green roof products and services. For more information on this opportunity, contact [jsprout@greenroofs.org](mailto:jsprout@greenroofs.org)

## Workshops in Other Places

**Light straw-clay events** presented by Robert Laporte and/or Paula Baker-Laporte in **Santa Fe, NM**:  
Contact: [info@econest.com](mailto:info@econest.com) or [www.econest.com/calendar](http://www.econest.com/calendar). Robert Laporte conducts straw/clay workshops of various durations, usually in New Mexico. Look here and see stunning homes from "tiny" to normal size. No nails. Robert uses Japanese-style joinery and you will learn how to do this, too.

**The Last Straw Journal** lists diverse natural building workshops in the **Northwest and Canada**. Go to [www.thelaststraw.org](http://www.thelaststraw.org) for complete information.

**Barefoot Builder**. Cob workshops in Tennessee. This site also contains a link to a listing of additional workshops around the country. [www.barefootbuilder.com](http://www.barefootbuilder.com)

**Kleiwerks** is an international Natural Building non-profit organization, teaching people how to build appropriately designed earth and straw shelters with affordable and indigenous materials. For more information about Kleiwerks visit [www.kleiwerks.org/index.php](http://www.kleiwerks.org/index.php)



## Local Events

### Tuesday, November 14, 2006, 9:30 a.m. Austin Energy/AISD Solar System Ribbon Cutting

O. Henry Middle School, 2610 W. 10<sup>th</sup> St., Austin, Texas

Austin Energy is pleased to announce the completion of solar system installations at nine Austin Independent School District schools. To celebrate this achievement, please mark your calendars for a ribbon cutting ceremony on November 14, 2006.

About Austin Energy's Solar Schools Project: *Austin Energy's Solar School Program gives schools the opportunity to host a solar energy system that provides supplemental electricity to the school. Through an on-site computer and additional equipment, students get a first-hand look at the amount of solar energy produced at their school.*

For questions, please contact Brenda de la Garza at 972-9540 or by e-mail: [brenda.delagarza@austinenenergy.com](mailto:brenda.delagarza@austinenenergy.com)

### November 14, 2006 and December 12, 2006

#### Austin Orientation: Introductions to Living Well in Austin

Tuesday, 6:00-8:30 p.m.

(6:00 p.m. Registration, 6:30-8:00 p.m. Presentation, Q&A 8:00-8:30 p.m. Mingle)

Tons of information, Appetizers, Take-home Materials & Door Prizes

**Learn** highlights of Austin's geography and natural features, local and green enterprises, history, culture, civics, music, publications, resource numbers and much more.

**Discover** how to live, shop, eat and recreate in ways that celebrate and support our local culture, economy and environment.

**Depart** with your questions answered, tons of information, and the feeling that you are "plugged in."

**Coordinates:** Austin Java, 1608 Barton Springs Rd. (on north side of Barton Springs, along restaurant row, between Lamar and Zilker Park <http://www.austinjava.com>)

**Tickets:** Available at the door, by mail or online <http://www.austinunique.com/orientation.htm> .

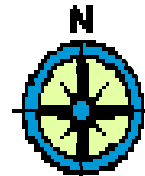
\$20 per person \$30 per couple (or any 2 who carpool) \$36 per family (well-behaved kids and teens welcome)

Discounts for students and seniors.

**Guide:** Brandi Clark 512-736-8567 [brandi@AustinOrientation.com](mailto:brandi@AustinOrientation.com)

This event cosponsored by Austin Unique [www.austinunique.com](http://www.austinunique.com)

Can't make it this month? It will be offered again on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of each month. Mark your calendar!



### Friday, December 1, 2006 Sustainable Building Coalition Holiday Party!

Enjoy a festive evening with your SBC friends!

Members, watch your mailbox for a post card with all the details!



Ladies & Gentlemen!

WE ARE EXCITED.

Announcing the 5th and final "Sustainable Shopper's Ball!" of 2006,

"Have a Green, Green Holiday"

Saturday, December 9, 2006

9:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m., at The Sunset Valley Farmers Market.



Program:

- ➔ Speaker Tent: *Planet, Reason, Season* - exploring spirituality and sustainability
- ➔ Kids Area: Loads of entertainers and sustainable gift making activities
- ➔ Booths: Lots of amazing local phenoms (this means you!)
- ➔ Cafe: Austin's best and brightest musical entertainers
- ➔ *And Sustainably Harvested Food, Food, Food!*

YOU ARE INVITED to Austin's first ever green Winter Holiday event! We love this community and we love getting people together to promote their sustainable endeavors. Let's Celebrate!

Expected attendance = 3,000 to 6,000 people. For more information or to sign up for a booth, email us at [admin@sustain-a-ball.org](mailto:admin@sustain-a-ball.org) or call 512-934-1387.

We look forward to seeing you bright & early—Saturday December 9, 2006!!

## **Sustainable Building Coalition Coordinators Committee**

Programs and site visits: Gayle Borst  
Membership: Frieda Rinehart  
Community Outreach: Yvonne Hansen  
Website Development: Shirley Allaway  
Treasurer & Book Sales: Frieda Rinehart

Nonprofit 501(c)(3) Committee: Ken McKenzie  
Newsletter Columnists: Megan Clark and others  
Newsletter Publication: Mina Loomis  
Coordinators' Coordinator: Kerry Kittrell Foster

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All SBC Coordinators are volunteers. If you would like to contact anyone of us by email, visit the contact form on the Greenbuilder website at: <http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/contact>

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## **SBC Membership and Renewals**

**Sustainable Building Coalition membership** is open to builders, architects and anyone desiring to learn about and support sustainable building and development in all of its aspects. Dues are \$35 business member, \$25 paper newsletter member, and \$15 email newsletter members. Members receive the monthly newsletter, great book discounts, and admission to all regularly scheduled SBC meetings and site visits. Visit [www.greenbuilder.com/sbc](http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc) to learn about additional perks for business members. Find a membership application at [www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/memberapp.pdf](http://www.greenbuilder.com/sbc/memberapp.pdf).

**Mail applications, dues, and renewals to:**  
**The Sustainable Building Coalition, P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381**  
**or bring to a SBC monthly meeting or event.**

*"The coalition exists to facilitate the organization and education of the building and design communities and the general public to foster: healthy and ecologically sound built environments - sustainable resource use - responsible and healthy businesses."*

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