



DESIGN. BUILD. LIVE

Volume 14 Issue 1 January 2007

The eNewsletter of Design. Build. Live, formerly Sustainable Building Coalition
P.O. Box 49381, Austin, TX 78765-9381 www.greenbuilder.com/sbc

In This Issue...

Monthly Meeting

Materials: Kirei Board

Local Workshops

Citizen Wildfire Ecology

Natural Building Colloquium

Workshops in Other Places

The Last Straw Journal

Cob Cottage Available

Board of Directors and Contacts

DBL Calendar:

January 17

Monthly Meeting: Meet the new Design. Build. Live!

February 21

Monthly Meeting:
"New Villages for Sustainable Living" by Robert McIntyre

March 21

Monthly Meeting:
Micro-politics, Materials and Mud: Sustainable Construction in Brasil" by Megan Clark

January 17 Monthly Meeting:

SBC is Evolving!
Meet the new Design. Build. Live!



DESIGN. BUILD. LIVE

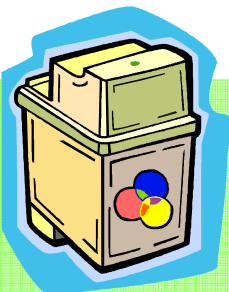
Sustainable Building Coalition is fifteen years old. In that time we have offered monthly presentations and periodic site visits, sponsored hands-on workshops, spun off and reabsorbed SBAT (Straw Bale Association of Texas), spawned a San Antonio SBC, and preached sustainable building and living to anyone who would listen. In recent years, the unflinching and growing interest in sustainability has encouraged us to think about taking the SBC to the next level.

We finally took the big plunge and officially incorporated as a nonprofit organization with a new name and a new, expanded mission. Reflecting a goal to facilitate the incorporation of sustainability into every aspect of people's lives, the new, more action-oriented organization is Design. Build. Live (DBL). While sustainable building will remain of central importance in our educational efforts, all aspects of a more sustainable lifestyle will be part of the mission.

This month's presentation will be an introduction to the exciting classes, workshops, activities and projects being planned for Design. Build. Live. We invite everyone, from long-time SBC members to those who are just discovering the concepts of sustainability, to come and discover the expanded opportunities possible through the new nonprofit organization.



DBL meets every 3rd Wednesday of the month (except December) at 7:00 p.m. at Casa de Luz complex, 1701 Toomey Road, upstairs in the Cielo Room. You are welcome to join us before the meeting at 6:00 p.m. for a wonderful macrobiotic meal (approx. \$7-\$12) in the Casa de Luz restaurant, www.casadeluz.org



Sustainable Tip of the Month

Recycle your spent ink cartridges and get free paper to boot!
Take your empty ink jet or laser cartridges to Office Depot for recycling, and leave with a free ream of recycled paper or money off your purchase (\$3 - \$5). Some other office supply stores have similar programs, so check with the store nearest you. Details vary.

Materials: Kirei Board by Megan Clark

Happy New Year! Hard to believe it's been a week since First Night and that we're ready for the very first DBL Newsletter of 2007. It is fitting that the topic for January was inspired by a visit to the December Sustain-A-Ball festival and one of the local vendors their team brings together to educate and serve the Austin community. We were all at the same event, but everyone's got their eye out for a little something different. For instance, that Saturday I also had my eye on the caramel corn from Hot Rock'n & Pop'n Kettle Corn (no, they didn't pay me), but I digress. The product I'm talking about is Kirei Board, the grain-based building panel manufactured by Kirei USA and carried by Green Home Outfitters out of Blanco, TX.

I first heard about Kirei Board a few years ago from an architect friend back in Ohio. Since then it's been profiled by designers at Treehugger (www.treehugger.com) and eco-watchdogs at WorldChanging (www.worldchanging.com), and picked up by eco-building retailers across the U.S. So, what is this stuff? What can you do with it? And how sustainable is it? Kirei Board is made from sorghum (*Sorghum Bicolor*) stalks—a grass raised for grain that has over 25 species—mixed with KR Bond adhesive and poplar wood. (www.kireiusa.com; <http://aob.oxfordjournals.org>) Sorghum is often called a “camel among crops” because of its drought tolerance and low water demand, and it is grown throughout the world to make flour, beer, molasses, and animal feed, among other things. (www.fao.org) The Kirei USA manufacturing plant is located in the midst of a group of sorghum farms in Northern China, to which farmers bring the unwanted sorghum stalks in exchange for additional income. There, the stalks are laid in crosshatched layers with strips of virgin poplar wood as bonding accessories, treated with KR Bond adhesive, and heat-pressed into large sheets that are then cut down for shipping and sales. (www.kireiusa.com) The KR Bond adhesive is an Aque-

ous Polymer Isocyanate (API) first developed in Japan as an adhesive for structural chipboard. (www.forestprod.org; <http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com>) According to a 2002 Shanghai University report, the distinctive characteristics of API are high bonding strength, resistance to aging, and little-to-no formaldehyde or phenol content, reasons for which it has been substituted for traditional urea formaldehyde (UF) adhesives. A key component of API, however, is PVAc, or vinyl acetate, a water-based polymer latex. (<http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com>)

The resulting building panels have a unique visual quality and structural integrity that is not unlike bamboo, but with greater variation of color and texture. These characteristics help the product to live up to its brand name, Kirei, which roughly translates to “clean,” “truthful,” and “beautiful” in Japanese, and make it desirable as both a structural and finish material. Kirei USA lists wall covering, cabinetry, furniture and flooring among its key uses, along with hotel and retail showcase applications. It is also workable using standard wood tools, making it possible to install or fashion without professional help. The manufacturer recommends that care be taken to avoid chipping of the composite materials, and their website includes tips for cutting, drilling and finishing the boards. (www.kireiusa.com)

On to the sustainability test – the rest is just filler, right? To start, sorghum stalks are a waste product in any situation, regardless of the crop's end-use. The farmers who provide the stalks are within relative proximity of the manufacturing plant, and they receive compensation for a product that would otherwise be burned or discarded. Kirei USA also indicates that those working within the plant receive “better-than-market wage[s]” and “[work] in good conditions.” (www.kireiusa.com) The minimized formaldehyde makes it Low-VOC, a boon for environmental health as well as those looking for green building points. The structural

strength makes it physically competitive with plywood, but the variegated surface creates visual interest that precludes the need for veneers and other virgin wood products. It should be said that the cost is higher than that of plywood and like products, but users should compare it to products in their specific category of need to determine cost competitiveness. And lastly, Kirei Board is manufactured in China and marketed from California (the big buzz kill), but at this time it is available to Texans through Green Home Outfitters, which means benefits go to a local business rather than a big box store.

So, if your New Year's resolutions are to be more sustainable, more conscientious, and more *hip*, check out the Treehugger-endorsed Kirei Board online at www.mygho.com. Maybe one day someone will take advantage of the large amount of waste produced by Texas' own sorghum crop and start local manufacturing! Now, if we could just eliminate that pesky vinyl...

Already know about it? Want to hear about other topics? Please send your suggestions, corrections and comments to me @ meganann@mail.utexas.edu. Thank You!



Local Workshops

TEXAS FOREST SERVICE OFFERS CLASSES IN WILDFIRE THREAT MITIGATION

Beginning on **February 13, 2007**, the Texas Forest Service will begin a **Citizen Wildfire Ecology Specialist** certification program for Hill Country residents. Participants will learn about wildfire, its history and behavior. They will also learn how to reduce the threat of wildfire to their homes or other property by using landscaping and other techniques. A property can be better prepared to withstand a wildfire and still be very attractively landscaped.

The Texas Forest Service, through its Urban Wildland Interface (UWI) program, provides several education and informational opportunities to Texas residents. The Citizen Wildfire Ecology Specialist class is one of its newest. Rich Gray, UWI Coordinator, said, "This class is appropriate for all persons with an interest in the environment, but particularly property owners who live in wooded areas. As more people move into rural woodland areas, wildfire becomes a greater risk to property and to life." Classes will be held at the **Gillespie County Cooperative Extension** office in **Fredericksburg** on February 13 and 14, with a day-long field trip on February 27. Registration is \$50. The class size is limited to 30 trainees. This class is hosted locally by the Texas Master Naturalists—Hill Country Chapter. **For more information call Priscilla Stanley at (830) 257-2094.**

NATURAL BUILDING COLLOQUIUM 2007 SLATED FOR OCTOBER IN KERRVILLE, TEXAS

Quiet Valley Ranch, home of the long-running, world famous Kerrville Folk Festival, will host the Natural Building Colloquium from **October 19-28, 2007**. Austin's Design. Build. Live/Sustainable Building Coalition, Quiet Valley Ranch and other Texas natural building leaders will work with colloquium participants to improve facilities used by Kerrville Folk Festival artists, staff and visitors. "We're looking forward to offering hands-on natural building seminars in this wide open setting, and hosting talks from leading natural building architects, builders, experts and teachers," says Kindra Welch, co-organizer of this event. "Right now, we're asking everyone to save the date."

"The state of the world now is pretty messed up, and anything we can do to show people a better way to build, any positive changes we can make, we need to do," says Frank Meyer, a straw bale construction veteran and event co-organizer.

Natural building emphasizes construction techniques that are deeply sustainable: materials are generally harvested from the earth, forests and fields near a site. Ms. Welch says, "Natural buildings become pieces of art created with soul and purpose." **Permaculture**, or "permanent agriculture" as originated by Bill Mollison, is the practice of designing sustainable human habitats by following nature's patterns, integrating ecology, landscape, organic gardening, architecture and agroforestry. Possible topics or projects for this colloquium currently under consideration include **straw bale construction, cob construction, earthen and lime plasters, earthen floors, natural building theory and practice, owner-builder project presentations and more.**

Details on registration, costs, speakers, schedules, and other colloquium details are yet to be determined, but will be posted on the 2007 colloquium's web site (<http://www.naturalbuildingtexas.org>) as soon as is feasible.

Colloquium planning committees are formed but not full. **Anyone interested in supporting this event with time or other resources should contact Ms. Welch** at kindra@claysandstraw.com or (512) 663-3166.

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 or www.econest.com/calendar. Robert Laporte conducts straw/clay (leichtlehmbau) and timber framing workshops of various durations. 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. Go to www.thelaststraw.org for complete information.

Barefoot Builder. Cob workshops. This site contains a link to a listing of workshops around the country. 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



Straw Bale Resource



The Last Straw

The International Journal of Straw Bale and Natural Building

The long-awaited **CD-Rom** of the first ten years of **The Last Straw Journal** is now available for purchase. The searchable CD includes articles and features of issues No. 1 through No. 40 of The Last Straw, the international quarterly journal of strawbale and natural building. The CD can be used on both PC and Mac formats.

To place an order, please go to the TLS web site at <http://www.thelaststraw.org> and click on Back Issues and CD-Rom where you will find an order form. You can fax the form to (402) 483-5161 or mail to GPFS/TLS, PO Box 22706, Lincoln NE 68542-2706 USA or call the TLS Office in Lincoln, Nebraska, at (402)483-5135.

The cost including shipping/handling worldwide is \$40.00 USD. Checks, Money Orders and Credit Card payments are accepted.

Joyce Coppinger
Managing Editor, The Last Straw Journal



Local Events

Solar Austin January Happy Hour
January 18, 2007 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Artz Rib House 2330 South Lamar



Power Smack: a Lively Chat about Power, Money and Clean Energy by Mike Sloan. Mike's presentations are always informative, engaging and entertaining. Sometimes his ideas seem speculative or even outlandish, but soon those same ideas become the prevailing wisdom. **PLAN TO EAT DINNER!** Don't miss the opportunity to check out Artz' bar-beque. You won't be disappointed. Because Artz is providing the room for free, we need to purchase a reasonable number of dinners. Also, beer is readily available at Artz. Come on out for dinner, listen to Mike's insights about the future of renewable energy and share your thoughts. Please RSVP and let us know how many people you are bringing and how many will be having dinner. **NOTICE:** The presentation and ensuing conversation will be filmed. (Please comb your hair before attending.)

Chip Wolfe Solar Austin
email: chip@meridiansolar.com
web: <http://www.solaraustin.org/>

Cob Cottage Available

For sale: Beautiful 8-acre property near Bastrop with a cob cottage and an in-progress strawbale cottage. Pond, large trees, great soil for gardening. Perfect for owner-builders, ranchers and cohousing. For more info, visit www.hashimusic.com/cob-cottage.



DESIGN. BUILD. LIVE

(Formerly Sustainable Building Coalition)
P.O. Box 49381 Austin, TX 78765-9381

Design. Build. Live Board of Directors

Gayle Borst, President
Ken McKenzie-Grant, Vice President
Yvonne Hansen, Second Vice President
Terri Finch-Koimuna, Treasurer
Kerry Kittrell Foster, Secretary

Contacts

Programs and site visits: Gayle Borst
Community Outreach: Yvonne Hansen
Website Development: Shirley Allaway
Book Sales: Frieda Rinehart
Newsletter Columnists: Megan Clark and others
Newsletter Publication: Mina Loomis
Coordinator: Kerry Kittrell Foster

All DBL Directors and Contacts 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>



DESIGN. BUILD. LIVE

“Design. Build. Live 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.”

Copyright 2007