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## Berks County Community Foundation Building designed to save energy, money

Some items are from recycled materials; others will cut bills by saving energy, capturing rainwater for reuse

By Darrin Youker  
*Reading Eagle*

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- Every time it rains, the Berks County Community Foundation will save money.

The foundation's new \$4.5 million office building at Third and Court streets features building techniques aimed at saving money and cutting utility use.

### Going 'green'

The Berks County Community Foundation soon will move into the first office building in Berks County recognized for its "green" design.

The building is expected to save the foundation 43 percent on heating and cooling costs and 80 percent on water bills.

Some of its environmentally sound features:

- A 5,000-gallon cistern that will collect rainwater for toilet flushing.
- Concrete on the main floor that's made from 40 percent fly ash.
- South-facing facade that allows more daylight.
- Trees to provide summer shade and cooling.
- Roof made of soil and native plants that will collect rainwater and help cool the building.
- Outdoor sensors that will tell occupants if it is cheaper to open windows for cooling or use air conditioning.
- Lights controlled by motion sensors that are also self-dimming, based on the amount of daylight in the room.

Source: Berks County Community Foundation

A 5,000-gallon cistern in the basement, for example, will store rainwater for flushing toilets, cutting water bills an estimated 80 percent, said Kevin K. Murphy, the foundation president. Tap water still will be used for hand washing and drinking.

"We don't think we'll ever go dry," Murphy said Monday during a tour of the nearly completed building.

The foundation expects to move into the building next week from the space it leases at Fifth and Washington streets.



*Reading Eagle: Lauren A. Little*

Berks County Community Foundation President Kevin K. Murphy in the organization's new office building, where countertops are made from recycled glass and shredded currency.

When the community foundation searched for a new home, the board of directors made it a priority to construct an environmentally "green" building, Murphy said.

While some school districts have incorporated green design into new buildings, the Community Foundation project will be the first office building in Berks County to receive Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification, Murphy said.

LEED certification is a nationally accepted benchmark for environmentally responsible design.

Using green techniques makes sense because of the long-term savings in utility costs, Murphy said.

"This is overcoming the inertia of bad habits," he said. "It has been slow to take off here. That is why we wanted to do it in a very public way."

Some of the design features are common-sense approaches to saving energy. For example, most of the building faces south, giving it plenty of exposure to natural daylight. Trees planted along the front will provide summer shading and cooling.

And instead of using traditional ventilation, the building has porous tubing that runs from floor to ceiling. The system heats or cools by blowing air horizontally, distributing it more evenly, Murphy said.

Some materials are recycled: Wooden stairs were reclaimed from boardwalks at Coney Island, N.Y., and countertops were fashioned from recycled glass chips and shredded U.S. currency.

Eric G. Burkey, president of Burkey Construction, the general contractor, said he believes green buildings will become more popular in this area. Already, his company is assisting on two other local projects.

"I wish all buildings were built this way," Burkey said. "It is just a more thoughtful construction and design process."

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