

NRDC Eco-Office Resource Efficient Building Project

The 20,000 square foot Eco-Office Project of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) is a synthesis of advanced resource-efficient designs and materials. The project showcases several environmental building materials and energy efficiencies. The environmentally friendly office space attacks many of the myths about such designs, in particular that they lose amenity and that they are too expensive. In the Eco-Office, all of the environmental features are invisible to the observer.

The project's materials include a solid, panelized, compressed straw wall system that replaces a conventional stud wall. The straw wall turns an agricultural waste product into an economic commodity that is easily installed and is sound dampening. Numerous architectural details for joining this system to more conventional materials, such as door frames, architectural glazing and drywall were developed. The office also features solid-core doors made of compressed straw, and a medium density fiberboard made from wheat straw is used for built-in millwork, including substrates and shelving. The project features extensive use of a laminate made from soy beans and recycled newspaper, which is joined to the "wheatboard" substrate. The Eco-Office uses ceiling tiles containing no mineral fibers and with over 20% recycled content; floor tiles containing 70% recycled glass; custom furniture using wood from certified well-managed forests; paints with 80 to 99% fewer volatile organic compounds than conventional paint; and low toxicity adhesives. Energy-efficient features include architectural light shelves and interior wall clerestories that bring daylight into the core of the space. High efficiency lighting is used throughout. Task-ambient lighting provides an even, glare-free environment particularly well-suited for the use of computers.

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