

GOING GREEN: NORTH COUNTY TO GET A NEW
STORE AND MORE
BUILDERS OF THE NEW TEMPLETON GROCERY,
WHICH OPENS FRIDAY, USED MANY GREEN
CONSTRUCTION TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS TO
EASE ITS ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

There's a small window just left of the distinctive mural of a classic Woody station wagon being pulled through a vineyard, and rays of sunshine peek through skylights scattered several feet above the neatly displayed bottles of Two-Buck Chuck. .

Together, these small touches offer the first hints at the host of environmentally friendly building techniques Atascadero-based Semmes & Co. Builders put into the North County's first Trader Joe's.

When the Monrovia-based grocery retailer opens its long-awaited Templeton store Friday, the 12,000-square-foot building at 1111 Rossi Road will mark the latest green construction project to hit the Central Coast.

Budget-conscious gourmands -- those not too busy stocking up on their favorite Trader Joe's creations to notice -- can expect to visit one of the region's first commercial buildings to use a hightech lighting system that measures the amount of sunlight creeping in and to replace traditional framing with pressed concrete forms that resemble large Lego toy blocks.

Those materials, say builder Turko Semmes, are part of an aggressive strategy by a number of firms to popularize green building in San Luis Obispo County. Those features, included in the building's original design, helped attract Trader Joe's to Templeton, Semmes said.

"We originally thought, 'Let's get a Trader Joe's in here,' " Semmes said of early discussions with his business partners. "But the timing, size and green features really played into this."

Semmes, who specializes in residential projects, is among a handful of local builders who have carved a niche in environmentally friendly construction. Known colloquially as green building, the practice is described as using techniques that reduce the impacts of new development on human health and the environment.

Semmes sits on the board of SLO Green Build, a local nonprofit consisting of 94 construction and architectural professionals that promotes Earth-friendly building programs. The group has earned the formal support of county officials and several local cities.

The practice was recently used in the construction of Congregation Beth David's new synagogue at Foothill Boulevard and Los Osos Valley Road in San Luis Obispo. The synagogue, completed in December, includes passive

solar ventilation, straw-bale construction and naturally heated water tanks.

A host of other Green Build projects -- including the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of San Luis Obispo County and San Luis Obispo Botanical Gardens -- are also in the works, said Scott Clark, a designer with San Luis Sustainability Group, which built Congregation Beth David's synagogue.

Commercial projects such as the new Trader Joe's have been slower to catch on, Semmes said, in part because it can be difficult for architects and designers to create an empty green building before they know the type of business that will occupy it.

But John Truesdale, who manages the new Trader Joe's, said being able to move into an existing green building was an added incentive for a company that receives unsolicited suggestions for new store locations on a daily basis.

"The structure was here," he said. "They liked the idea that it was a green building."

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GETTING GREEN

The practice of green building uses techniques that reduce the impacts of new development on human health and the environment. For more information on how to make your home or business more environmentally friendly, visit www.slogreenbuild.org.

--Written by Stephen Curran