

GREEN SOURCE

DFW

A Dallas/Ft. Worth Environmental News & Community Resource

Gary Olp - Architect - Environmentalist

By Esther Wu

If you drive past Gary Gene Olp's home, you may be struck by its contemporary design. But what makes his house truly different is not readily visible. Unlike most of the homes in Dallas, Mr. Olp's house not only saves him money, it helps save the environment. "To be more specific, it is helping to preserve the environment for future generations," explains Gary Gene Olp, who was recently appointed chairman of the North Texas chapter of the U.S. Green Building Council



"You know, Native Americans have a philosophy. They fully understand that decisions they make today will affect people seven generations from ours that will never know of us," said the founder of GGO Architects, a highly acclaimed firm that has been recognized for its innovative contemporary designs that incorporates a sustainable approach. (PhotoL Matt Hawthorne Photography)

"The environment doesn't have a problem. WE have a design problem," he said.

Design issues not only include how and where we build buildings, but also how we manufacture and grow things. Everything, according to Mr. Olp can be designed to minimize the output of pollution into our air, water and soil. "All the junk in our air is waste from leaky compressors, engines that spew gas products.... Until we as a society say dirty air is not acceptable, things won't change."

His own home sits on a wooded lot which provides much needed shade during the summer months. Mr. Olp placed windows and doors to avoid harsh, heat-producing sunlight. As a result, he was able to cut down air conditioning units, which in turn saves energy, lessens the demand on power plants, and eventually reduces the pollution produced by the plant. Not to mention the cost savings on Mr. Olp's electric bill. "Even during this heat wave, when the temperature has stayed at 100 plus degrees, I don't think my electric bill went up more than \$65," said Mr. Olp. "And during the winter time, there is virtually no additional cost. (Olp house photo: Terri Glanger Photography)



Other energy efficiency and sustainable considerations in his home include the use of high efficiency lighting, a tankless hot water heater and a standing seam-ventilated metal roof. The metal roof, explains Mr. Olp, may have cost more than disposable asphalt shingles, but reflects the sun, substantially reducing the air conditioning load by 75 percent. As an added bonus the metal roof offers him a discounted insurance rate and will have a far longer life than shingles. Though the initial cost may have been a bit higher, Mr. Olp said in the long run, metal roofing is not only cost effective, it is far more sustainable."

GGO Architects strives to incorporate energy efficiency, passive solar techniques, and natural day lighting, non-toxic materials, advanced building science and enhanced indoor air quality into their designs. GGO Architects was the first, and is the most successful green practice in Dallas. Since it was started in 1987, the company has completed more than 300 projects including residential, commercial, institutional and museum work throughout the United States.

Many new buildings are now built with conservation and sustainability in mind and are often cost effective. But Mr. Olp believes that retrofitting older buildings should be priority No. 1. "You can retrofit an existing

Announcements

[Photo Contest Voting Ends July 8th](#)

Hot Topics

- [Environment](#)
- [Green building / renovation](#)
- [Clean air](#)
- [Economics](#)
- [Energy](#)
- [Gas drilling](#)

[View all topics](#)

Events

« August »						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
	7	8	9	10	11	12
	14	15	16	17	18	19
	21	22	23	24	25	26
	28	29	30	31		

- Davis Mtn State Park Camping and Hiking Trip**
Wed, 08/10/2011 (Ongoing)
- Trinity River Corridor Project's Photo Contest**
Wed, 08/10/2011 (Ongoing)

[View all events](#)

Latest Blogs

New Energy Star Initiative Recognizes Cutting-Edge Products with Highest Energy Efficiency



by Robert Ruth

July 14, 2011

The new "Most Efficient" designation will help shoppers reduce their...

Worms at Work



by LKWilliams

by LK Williams

In my backyard. That's where I like to spend my time early in the...

But Mr. Olp believes that retrofitting older buildings should be priority NO. 1. "You can retrofit an existing building to the same level in terms of water and energy conservation as newer buildings," said Mr. Olp. He also said saving older structures reduces the demand for new building materials. "In the long run, a new high performance "green" building will never equal the environmental benefits of a renovated existing building. Below a home being retrofitted as an environmentally home under that is a rendering of the house after renovation (Photo GGO Architects, rendering Sierra Ruiz, Project Manager GGO Architects)



The contemporary designer has a deep appreciation for older buildings – particularly those in urban settings or town centers. Architecture, he explains, is not simply walls, windows and doors. Buildings, he explained, have a culture and craftsmanship that are an integral part of its surroundings.

Unlike many visionaries, Mr. Olp said there was not an actual "aha" moment in his life that inspired him to go green. "I've always been like this," said Mr. Olp. His love for the environment may stem from growing up on a farm and spending a great deal of time outdoors. "Dad said from the moment I was born, I was always asking about things, writing things down and talking about natural systems. This (environmental stewardship) just made good sense." That good sense, his talent for design combined with his responsibility to future generations is a winning combination.

Mr. Olp's lifestyle is a reflection of his philosophy about sustainability. He and his family eat principally organically grown foods. Mr. Olp is a beekeeper, producing enough honey to sell to a Lake Highlands coffee shop that specializes in free-trade beans. Mr. Olp moved GGO Architects to the Meadows Building on Lovers Lane because it was on a DART Line. And to encourage his employees to use public transportation, he provides them with DART passes. He convinced the property managers at the Meadows Building to institute a recycling program.

"If we are to have anything left for that seventh generation," Mr. Olp said, "we must re-evaluate what we do every day and the decisions we make now."

Esther Wu is a freelance writer and communications consultant. She was a columnist for the Dallas Morning News where she also served as assistant features editor, assistant political editor, assistant metro editor and assistant news editor. She is the recipient of the Dallas Press Club's Southwest Legacy Award for making an impact in the community. She also received a KATIE award from the club in 2001. Before joining The Morning News she wrote for the Bridgewater Courier News in New Jersey, Houston Post, and San Antonio Express-News. You can contact her at efwu@sbcglobal.net

Average:

No votes yet

Filed Under:

[Architecture / Design / Landscape](#) [Article](#) [Business](#) [Energy](#) [Environment](#) [Home](#) [Profile](#)

[SHARE](#)

Comments

[Post new comment](#)

Does investing in an energy efficient home make sense?



by Robert Ruth

The majority of the homes built in North Texas over the past...

[Read the full blog](#)