



(2011 eco awards)

FROM MICRO TO MACRO

BY SERENA RENNER



Meet the **environmental leaders** in our community who prove that both **individual choices** and **community efforts** make a difference.

illustrations by **NOMOCO** / icon illustrations by **CHI BIRMINGHAM** / portrait by **DREW KELLY**

(cities of the future)



1/Macro
Oakland Shines

WINS FOR: Working to make Oakland a bright example of a green city.

• Oakland is on its way to becoming a model green city, thanks to a \$5 million grant from the California Energy Commission to reduce the footprint of downtown. Oakland Shines aims to help businesses within a 120-square-block radius cut energy use by 20 percent. The program covers up to 90 percent of installation costs for advanced technologies, such as wireless lighting, smart thermostats, and daylight sensors. Plus, the program walks participants through every step of the way, from setting up a free energy audit to filling out rebate forms.

TIP

Contact PG&E for an energy audit, and visit its website to calculate your carbon footprint. pge.com.

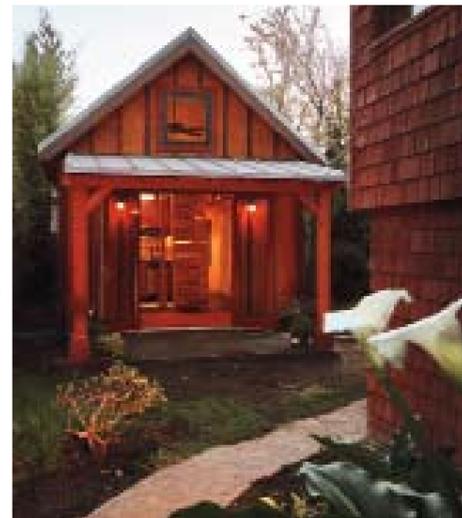
Oakland is a rich case study that could provide answers for other cities, says Derrick Rebello, president and CEO of Quantum Energy Services and Technology, the city's partner in the project.

"Oakland looks like many cities across the country," Rebello says. "If it works in Oakland, maybe it could work in Philly or downtown Los Angeles." oaklandshines.com.

2/Micro
The Delaware House

WINS FOR: Providing eco-chic housing, without building up or sprawling out.

• A new backyard cottage on Delaware Street in Berkeley provides city planning clues that scale beyond its tiny stature. Finished last fall, the 420-square-foot Delaware Cottage exemplifies "stealth infill"—in this case, the conversion of backyard lots into affordable housing units. While mini cottages aren't new to the community, this one claims net zero energy status, by featuring wider wall boards that pack more insulation and by running off nine solar panels on the main house. The cost of the cottage was \$98,000. Owner Karen Chapple, associate professor of city and regional planning at UC Berkeley, recognizes that there are barriers to these dwellings, namely parking and permitting, but through research funded by the UC Transportation Center, she's already identified more than 3,000 lots in Berkeley that could accommodate such units. iurd.berkeley.edu.



LEFT TO RIGHT: DAVID TUDURY; COPYRIGHT NEW AVENUE HOMES, 2010



(FARMING LOCAL FOOD)



1/Micro
Megan Langner

WINS FOR: Making a safe home for some 120,000 honeybees.

• It's not every day that you meet a beekeeper, let alone a high school beekeeper, but Acalanes High senior Megan Langner admits that she defies the norm. She's been beekeeping with her father since age 12 and now monitors three hives in her Lafayette backyard, each housing 40,000 to 50,000 honeybees.

Bees play a vital role ecologically, pollinating \$10 billion of the agricultural economy, and beekeepers provide a safe home for bees that are often displaced by the removal of trees. "Hives are closely observed and regulated by beekeepers, so the bees are actually healthier and can reproduce to benefit the environment," Langner says.

TIP

Buy local honey. It supports the area's beekeepers and is believed to help ease seasonal allergies.

Last summer, Langner completed her Gold Award project for Girl Scouts, Keep the Bees, in which she helped four families set up hives. "I constantly talk about bees," she says. "I know I'll be a beekeeper for the rest of my life."

2/Macro
Lafayette Local Food Group

WINS FOR: Bringing a bounty of fresh food to a city that didn't have a farmers market.

• The Lafayette Local Food Group, the gastronomic branch of Sustainable Lafayette, has been busy. The group spearheaded the new Lafayette farmers market, helped spawn a community-supported agriculture program, and worked with the Urban Farmers to plant 20 backyard farms. This year, the organization aims to add 60 more



farm plots, establish a community garden across from the Lafayette Reservoir, and host the second annual Earth Day picnic. The association also works with the City of Lafayette United Chicken Keepers (CLUCK), a group that's nearing 100 families who all produce fresh local eggs. sustainablelafayette.net/residents/local-food.html.

(green wheels)



1/Micro
Changing Gears Bike Shop

WINS FOR: Reducing landfill waste and providing job training, one bike at a time.



• Need some new wheels? Hidden in the sea of warehouses at Alameda Point, there's a community-run bike shop, where you can buy shiny collectables and commuters, fix your ride, donate an old bike, or volunteer. While Changing Gears may look like your average bike shop, it was built mostly by volunteers, who also help refurbish some of the 1,200 unwanted bikes the nonprofit receives each year. Of the store's three full-time employees, two are 21-year-old graduates of the shop's job-training program for underserved residents in the area. The best part? The shop shares a healthy lifestyle with those in need. changinggearsbikes.org.

2/Macro
City of Martinez

WINS FOR: Bringing the future to the city with three new 240-volt car charging stations.

• With a grant from 511 Contra Costa, the city of Martinez now has three 240-volt electric car charging stations, ready for the Nissan Leafs and Chevy Volts to start rolling into town. While other cities such as Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill also have charging stations, Martinez was the first to upgrade to 240 volts last December, which greatly reduces charging time. The stations are at City Hall, the Amtrak depot, and on the corner of Main and Court streets, and soon, they'll offer real-time updates about station availability so you don't run down your battery circling the block. cityofmartinez.org.

(businesses to learn from)



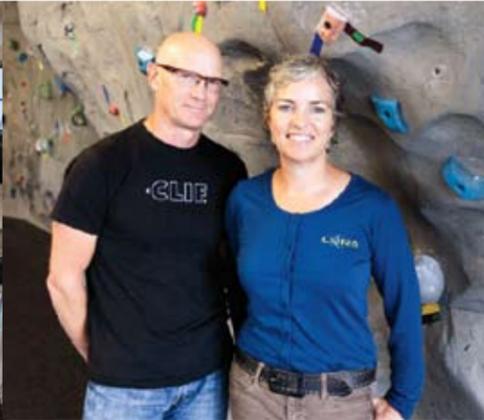
1 / Macro
Clif Bar And Company

WINS FOR: Giving energy but also saving it.

• Last September, East Bay-based Clif Bar and Company moved into a new 115,000-square-foot home in Emeryville that brings the outdoor lifestyle into the workplace. The new headquarters was built to live up to the company's five aspirations—to sustain its brand, business, people, community, and the planet. This means everything from picking a spot near public transit to finding room for a mammoth smart solar array, which should help the company earn Platinum LEED certification, once all the panels are installed by summer's end. Defunct railroad ties and old shipping pallets, some of which were found at the Port of Oakland, were brought into the woodwork while reclaimed bikes, kayaks, wind sails, and skis hang from the ceiling, and old bike tubes serve as door handles. And the company takes being green one step further: An employee can earn up to \$6,500 for buying an alternative-fuel or hybrid vehicle and up to \$1,000 a year for making eco upgrades on a home. clifbar.com.

CHALLENGE

For trips two miles or less, Clif Bar challenges you to ride your bike. Log your rides to earn money for your favorite outdoor nonprofit. 2milechallenge.com.



2 / Micro
Concannon Vineyard Estate

WINS FOR: Proving that wines can be both eco friendly and high quality.

• Old timers might recognize the renovated tasting room at Concannon Vineyard Estate in Livermore. The pillars and bricks came from the original Concannon building that dates back more than 100 years, and the redwood panels were made from recycled wine barrels that used to dominate the region. What they won't recognize is the new Underdog Wine Bar or the solar panels that cover 80 percent of the winery's roof, supplying about 40 percent of its energy. Also new is the tier of Conservancy Wines, made with grapes from more than 200 acres of vineyards protected against urban development. Not only are these wines good for the environment, "They're also a good value and a good bottle of wine," says estate manager Jim Ryan. The 2007 Conservancy Cabernet Sauvignon (\$15) recently earned a double gold rating at the *San Francisco Chronicle* Wine Competition. Cheers to that! concannonvineyard.com.



COURTESY OF CLIF BAR & COMPANY



(GRASSROOTS GREENING)



1 / Micro
Sustainable Lafayette

WINS FOR: Launching Lafayette to the forefront of eco cities.

• Who would have thought that two dads inspired by *An Inconvenient Truth* could turn Lafayette into a hotbed of all things green? Certainly not Steve Richard or Bart Carr, who unofficially began Sustainable Lafayette one day over coffee at Papillon. "I was telling Bart about my solar panels, and he was talking about composting," says Richard. "We wondered if other people in the community would be interested in these stories."

They started a website for community members to share success stories and ideas, and in less than four years, Sustainable Lafayette has mushroomed into a nonprofit that has helped establish innovative programs, ranging from the Lafayette School District Green Team to the Green Business Recognition Program. The Green Team aims to audit every

(continued on 106)

2 / Macro
4CL and Generation Green

WINS FOR: Making it easier than ever for cities to collaborate on climate action.

• How does your city compare to others on climate action? Just go to the Contra Costa County Climate Leaders (4CL) website and click on "local actions" to find out. The network, run by the nonprofit Generation Green, sends out a monthly e-newsletter, hosts quarterly workshops, and runs this handy site so cities



can network, share best practices, and collaborate on the common goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions countywide. Kudos to Martinez for being one of the first cities in the county to complete a climate action plan of its own. cccclimateleaders.org, generationgreen.com.

(reduce, reuse)



1 / Macro
Food Recycling Project

WINS FOR: Converting 30 tons of food scraps into renewable energy every week.

• No need to feel guilty the next time you can't finish that hamburger. Central Contra Costa Solid Waste Authority has partnered with Allied Waste and the East Bay Municipal Utility District to turn food scraps from restaurants, grocery stores, and a few schools into methane that runs EBMUD's wastewater treatment plant. The Food Recycling Project became official last September and now includes 127 participants that supply roughly 30 tons of food waste per week—enough energy to power about 400 homes for a day. Once a new turbine joins the facility this fall, EBMUD will produce more power than it needs, meaning more renewable energy for the grid. wastediversion.org.



2 / Micro
Beth Terry

WINS FOR: Showing us that it's possible to live with virtually no plastic.

• There are some people who recycle their plastic, and then there's Oakland resident Beth Terry. In 2007, after being deeply moved by a photo of an albatross carcass filled with plastic trash, Terry decided to try cutting plastic out of her life—cold turkey. She started a blog, myplasticfreelife.com, where she writes about plastic alternatives, presents unexpected findings (Did you know chewing gum is made from plastic?), and tracks her own consumption habits. Last year, her plastic tally weighed just over two

(continued on 106)

sustainable lafayette

(continued from 39) campus in the district for water-, waste-, and energy-saving opportunities, recognizing that retrofitting one school is like converting dozens of homes. Since the Green Business Recognition Program launched in 2008, 35 establishments have been designated green by the city. The group also hosts regular seminars and environmental film screenings, helped release a green shopping guide, established a local foods group, and has inspired other communities like Danville and San Ramon to start sustainability groups of their own. “We’ve had a lot of coffees,” Richard says, with a laugh.

The most important lesson Richard, whom some know as “Mr. Positive,” hopes to impart is the belief that change can be made from the ground up.

“Citizens and residents can make a lot of things happen if they’re organized, excited, and have the right approach,” he says. “Don’t sit around, wait, and complain. Get some of your friends together, and go for it!” sustainablelafayette.org.

beth terry

(continued from 39) pounds—about 2 percent of the national average that hovers between 88 and 100 pounds.

She’s achieved this through simple efforts, such as bringing a reusable glass straw to restaurants, as well as more extreme measures, like making her own cat food to avoid the plastic lining. She’s been featured in the *New York Times* and other outlets for a campaign to get Clorox to recycle disposable Brita water filters. She collected 16,000 signatures and asked people to mail her their filters, ultimately storing more than 600 under her dining room table until she finally was able to recycle them at Whole Foods in Oakland.

“I’ve realized that my voice can make a difference,” Terry says, “that what I think matters, and that my personal actions can have an impact in this world, for good or for bad. It’s helped me see that we don’t have to accept the menu that is offered to us; we can ask for what we want to be changed.”

For plastic-free tips, visit myplasticfreelife.com/plasticfreeguide.

Challenge: Collect your plastic waste for one week, and photograph and post the results on myplasticfreelife.com/showyourplastic. You might be surprised by what you find.