

Small business is big on sustainability

Beth Casper 9:18 p.m. PST March 8, 2014



(Photo: Special to the Statesman Journal)

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Decisions made at Financial Products & Services Inc. do not just affect the bottom line. The business' leaders have a three-part decision-making process for business practices: financial, social and environmental.

It has meant that the company saved the property's fig trees, added solar panels, reduced garbage and turned lawn into garden.

The office, on Liberty Street SE, went so far as to gain its EarthWISE certification in 2011. The EarthWISE program is a free business environmental assistance program of Marion County. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy, reduce waste and much more. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. Financial Products & Services, known as FPS, is one of more than 100 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

After purchasing the building and property in 1996, the owners persuaded the contractor to save the fig trees in the middle of the planned parking lot. With the addition of four

apple trees, the business now boasts a small orchard — and less grass that needs to be fertilized, watered or mowed.

“I said to myself, ‘Why am I growing all that grass if I don’t have a cow?’ ” said company president Richard Pine.

Pine also plans to grow vegetables to donate to the local food bank.

Pine and other leaders invested early in energy audits for the office, which was built in 1944. The information from those audits resulted in added insulation, updated windows and solar energy on the building. The solar panels installed in 2007 generate about one-third of the office’s needs during the summer months. Almost all of the lighting has been replaced with high-efficiency lights, and outdoor lights have timers and sensors to conserve energy.

Since 2006, Pine has driven an electric car. Employees and tenants with employees who do not drive to work are compensated with the value of a monthly bus pass.

Because FPS has other tenants in its building, the tenants need to be aware of and cooperative with all of the environmental efforts in the office. Tenants sign lease agreements that clearly outline expectations. All of the employees in the office building recycle at their desks and compost in the kitchen area. Two bins are in the restroom to separate garbage from compostable paper towels. The entire office building uses the smallest garbage can available through its garbage hauler.

FPS’ practices not only earned it EarthWISE certification, but, in 2001, Oregon Business Magazine named FPS as the best small business to work for in Oregon.

About EarthWise

To find out more about other EarthWISE businesses or the EarthWISE program, go to www.mcEarthWISE.net.