

Finding balance — Asheville Yoga Center

□ BY GARRET K. WOODWARD □

Sunny Keach wanted more.

"You get in this reality of what you can actually do with your business, what builders can actually do these days, and what banks are willing to work with you in terms of your vision," he said.

Co-owner of Asheville Yoga Center, Keach is at the helm of the almost 20-year-old business that pushes forth an agenda of yoga and community all wrapped in a sustainable mindset.

"It's minimal waste with maximum efficiency," he said.

Located on Liberty Street, the original building (occupied since 2001) was a work-in-progress as the center refurbished the structure, implementing green initiatives (such as solar panels) while growing the brand as one of the premier yoga facilities in the country. But Keach was looking to expand, and expand smartly.

Seeing what Earthhaven Ecovillage in Black Mountain (an intentional community) was doing in terms of sustainable living and edible landscapes, Keach decided he wanted to pursue something similar with the new center.

"When it came time to construct the second building, I wanted to go that route, which was a low carbon footprint within a design that was functional and efficient," he said. "We geared the new facility more towards long-term sustainability, one that will use the least amount of energy over time."

Opened on New Year's Day 2012, the two-yoga-room 3,500-square-foot half-acre building ideally complements its original refurbished sibling. The property is decorated with an array of edible and aromatic native trees and plants. The building is situated on an East/West axis, which provided for optimal natural light and a passive solar advantage with numerous panels installed on the roof. Rainwater is also directed back into the



Asheville Yoga Center's 29.1 KW solar system by Sundance Power. Elliot Dunwoody photo

ground instead of the nearby street.

"If you have a business that affords you some opportunities to create some green realities, why not make some of those realities you want to see in the world?" Keach said. "One of our core values is high quality, and we've always done our best for high quality with our service, but now we can also offer high quality in the facilities and the location. The building creates and nurtures the spirit of yoga, which is one of calming and centering, with no distractions. And with the natural, edible landscaping, we're also able to continue to carry our values outside of the building and onto the property."

Keach also went with Superior Wall construction. The easy-to-setup

walls allow the builder to install the high walls immediately, and with minimal onsite waste that would otherwise end up in a landfill. The walls also eliminate site disturbances, where now a quiet, well-insulated space is constructed. The airtight nature of walls plays into its heating and cooling, with the center using an efficient zoned heating and air conditioning system, which features a fresh air heat exchange and a DuctSox ductwork system. Simply put, hot air is removed between sessions as conditioned air is circulated throughout the building in an eco-friendly fashion.

"We were open for business within a six-month timeframe using the Superior Walls," Keach said. "There was no need to dig a base-

ment. You just level the land, add gravel, put up the walls, and have almost no leftover waste, which was something I really wanted to focus on — keep the cost down, and also keep the waste down."

With a total price tag hovering around \$1.4 million, Keach looks at the entire project with all of its green initiatives as an investment in not only his company, but also his community and the future of those around him.

"It's about thinking more than just the bottom line, and a lot of the time these green initiatives impact the bottom line positively," he said. "These initiatives do give us more attention and more clients, because they care about green features — people vote with their dollar."

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