

The Daily Norwalk

NCC Students Go to the Field to Study Building

by Nancy ChapmanToday



Stephen Berko explains the intricacies of a building under construction to NCC students Monday.

Photo Credit: *Nancy Chapman*

Green is coming, agrees Stephen Berko, a construction project manager. It's just not here yet.

"To achieve top level in this market costs way too much," the senior project manager for Summerview Square said to about 20 Norwalk Community College students Monday. "And that's one of the problems as builders we have with green or LEEDs: It costs too much money. If they'd lower the cost of the green materials, we would all be using them."

Professor Eric Gribin's students knew what LEED is – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design – because that's part of what they're studying. But they weren't in the classroom. They were on Berko's turf, examining the open web trusses and the soundproofing techniques in an unfinished apartment building off West Main Street.

"This is real, live," Gribin said. "They can see it. We've been working in a classroom with slides and presentations. Now we're actually feeling it and touching it."

The students are working for a certificate in Building Efficiency and Sustainable Technology. Gribin has been teaching the classes for two years. Last year a student said it would be nice to see actual framing, and this year Gribin made it happen.

Standing in what will become a garage, Berko showed them the trusses, which are built with an opening for a duct and have to be lined up precisely. It was part of what Gribin called "good solid building science."

Upstairs, after Berko had talked about building codes, Rabu Tarta asked about LEEDs. Berko got laughter when he said, "You get LEEDs points for putting a bike rack outside."

Tarta is from Romania and has a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. Like other students, he is changing careers, going into green building. And he could see Berko's point, the need to balance the economics with being green.

"The way they build is very precise building," he said. "I haven't seen this before. They have all the best way to run all the piping and they use high-efficiency windows. They manage the sound. That's a big thing for multi-family."

Are you a builder? What do you think about green technology? What about compact fluorescent bulbs? Or L.E.D.s?

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