

editor's note



SET AMIDST AN URBAN SETTING BORDERED BY TRAIN TRACKS, A CAR DEALERSHIP, AND APARTMENTS, THERE IS A SMALL NATURE CENTER IN THE TOWN WHERE I LIVE.

While all three of my kids love Emily Oaks, it's definitely a special place for my middle child. Since turning three, Joshua has gone to almost every age-appropriate program offered at the center.

At the beginning of summer, Emily Oaks had a nature festival focusing on recycling and the environment. One booth discussed a local restaurant's use of "green" cleaning supplies. Another talked about organic milk. And a third focused on construction where Cheryl talked to Josh about houses made of straw bales and roofing made of recycled rubber. When she was through, I asked where the steel was. Having known Cheryl for years, I felt comfortable launching into a discussion of steel's recyclability (okay, even if I hadn't known her, I still would have launched into my diatribe).

I told her that steel was the most recycled material in the world by weight, that 95% of the steel used in beams and columns comes from scrap, and that almost no steel ends up in landfills but is instead sent back to the steel mill to be recycled. And unlike other materials, recycled steel goes into high-end products like beams and columns rather than park benches and road beds. I also talked about how the steel industry has reduced its greenhouse gas emissions and its energy consumption. And how steel's light weight compared with other construction materials has less negative environmental impact.

And when I was done, Cheryl plucked my Steel *FANatic* hat off my head, doffed it, and added a discussion of steel to her talk on construction. Another convert.

All joking aside, I'm usually not surprised the average person on the street doesn't know more about the environmental benefits of steel construction, but I am surprised that more design professionals don't know:

- AISC members have recycled nearly 25 million tons of steel during the past five years;
- The iron and steel industry reduced carbon emissions by 37.7 percent between 1990 and 2003 (by comparison, the Kyoto protocol would have required U.S. industries to reduce emissions by just 5.2 percent by 2012);
- Energy consumption by the steel industry has dropped by a third since 1970 (and the steel industry has committed to the Climate Vision program, which seeks to reduce energy usage by an additional 10 percent by 2012).

This isn't your father's steel industry. Steel is made, sold, and fabricated more efficiently. If you're interested in seeing the process for yourself, talk to the fabricator of your next steel project. If you're willing to travel (the major beam mills in the U.S. are located in Blytheville, Ark., Columbia City, Ind., Midlothian, Texas, and Petersburg, Va.) the fabricator can often set up a mill tour for you. If that's too much of a time commitment, visit www.nucoryamato.com and click on general info/slide show. There's a brief overview of the process from the arrival of scrap to the pouring of molten steel into beam blanks to straightening. And most fabricators and service centers are happy to see designers visiting—and are usually more conveniently located than the mills.

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