

Powers Branch With Environment In Mind

lett, Reporter

turns out, Kermit the Frog is being green. At least it is for a community in which the environmental issue.

credit Union's main branch is designed from the ground up and building codes to achieve efficiency. According to the less energy than structures of

won two awards—on the local in the Association of General outstanding construction category from \$1 million to \$5 mil-



Union's main branch is a

Starting From Scratch

In early 2003, Austin FCU was preparing to build a new headquarters branch. Phil Mitchell, the CU's vice president, said it was a "design-build" situation, meaning it started with a blank sheet of paper.

"We hired a contractor who had built a couple of banks and one credit union in Austin," he recalled. "We went through the entire process of designing a building for a financial institution. The architect is a big advocate of conserving. Where possible, we are, too. He told us of the Austin Green Building Program."

Representatives from the city's Green Building Program met with Austin FCU management on six occasions, Mitchell said. The city made recommendations and put the credit union in touch with partners.

The building uses less electricity thanks to a combination of "clerestory" windows—which are placed high in the room to let in light, not for a view—and a continuous dimmer system. Clark Mente, the architect, said there is not much need for electric light during the day.

"A photocell reads the natural light and adjusts the lights accordingly," he said. "At night, the electric lights brighten up to normal levels."

The roof is an Energy Star qualified design that reflects sunlight during the hot Texas summers. The building is fully insulated and the "high performance" windows minimize heat exchange. The HVAC system is designed to be efficient and the correct size for the building. And the landscaping uses native, "water-wise" plants.

Austin FCU uses less electricity thanks to a combination of "clerestory" windows placed high in the room to let in light and a continuous dimmer system that allows the credit union to make the most of natural daylight instead of electric lights. The CU participated in the Austin Green building program because conservation and environmental issues are important to the community in which it is located.



Austin FCU's Mitchell said the credit union received a \$6,500 rebate from the City of Austin, lower utility bills, plus goodwill from the community.

"The membership has been extremely pleased and proud of their new headquarters building," he said. "More than anything, we want to let other credit unions know if they spend a little money up front, they will reap that ten-fold down the road."