

New super-efficient office blends with historic downtown Pensacola



By Jeff Rogers

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When businessman Rodney Rich decided to build a new office in downtown Pensacola, he had two goals — save money on his electricity bills and fit into the historic landscape.

“I’ve had folks come in here and ask if I’ve renovated a turn of the century building,” said Rich. “That’s what we were going for here — all the energy savings of a modern building, but with the classic look of a building that could have been standing here long ago.”

To get started, Rich summoned his architect, contractor and a Gulf Power representative to make sure there was agreement on an energy strategy. Together, they created a 4,300 square-foot EarthCents building that uses less energy than the older 1,650-square foot building he moved from.

Going into the project, Rich knew he wanted a geothermal heating and cooling system. Gulf Power’s Keith Swilley, Energy Sales and Efficiency manager, went to work to help spec out the system.

“Rodney knew all along he wanted to go geothermal,” said Swilley. “In fact, he had one of the very first residential geothermal systems in Pensacola. We developed a system to save money now and into the future as his business grows.”

Even though geothermal equipment costs more than traditional systems, more and more business owners are turning to geothermal heating and cooling as a federal tax credit, lower costs and rebates from utilities make it more feasible. And being able to recoup the higher upfront cost in a reasonable amount of time has made it attractive as well.

“With a 30-percent federal tax credit, Gulf Power’s \$400 per ton rebate and the quick payback, it’s a no-brainer for a business to opt for the savings over the long haul,” said Swilley. “To be able to save 50 percent on your heating and cooling costs is significant, especially when it makes up half of your electricity bill. Compared to similar buildings in the area, Rodney’s saving 30 to 35 percent on his total energy bill.”

Energy Efficient Design

- ICF Block construction
- 12-ton geothermal unit with 14 loops 300 feet deep
- Spray foam insulation
- Low-e windows
- Energy efficient lighting/motion lighting

