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[Sustainability and Authenticity, Personified](#)



In an era when the term "sustainability" is increasingly cast as mere [jargon](#), it is worth noting a sincere and authentic application of family, business and building which gives credence to the term.

Seattle entrepreneur, developer and philanthropist Mark Schuster's [Lofty Pursuits](#), published last September (Brown Books Publishing Group), is a must-read, for true believers and cynics alike, as a unique contribution to today's dialogue about the sustainable city.

Schuster's book focuses on family tradition and a related business ethic infused by his grandfather, George Mosler, and their embodiment not only in Schuster's career, but in an award-winning downtown Seattle building, [Mosler Lofts](#). In the spirit of Tracy Kidder's 1999 book [House](#), the reader is left with a multi-disciplinary, emotional and technical experience of building creation, with multiple lessons learned.

Mosler Lofts was Seattle's first [LEED Silver-certified](#) condominium, completed in 2008, and has won over 60 awards at the local, regional and national levels. The story of the building's challenges--from concept stage through financing and construction-- could have been the book's sole story-line, complete with notable detours such as overcoming cracked foundations on adjacent property.

Yet the inspirational -- and, more commendable -- aspect of Schuster's storytelling shows how the initiatives of his development team towards achieving green construction and LEED criteria merged with something far more universal: family values and giving back to the community with the future in mind. Given Schuster's [long resume](#) of community service and social responsibility, his sustainable outlook evokes an authenticity which defies easy

challenge.

Lessons learned? Countless family memories, reflections from self-education and business start-ups, on the job CEO and community service learning as well as the richness of a collaborative, team environment. Schuster is frank and self-critical throughout, particularly amid the hard knocks of project delay and complexity, which is particularly key to the book's holistic success.

While Schuster's narrative is sometimes truly "lofty"--by including a personal 2005 visit with Israeli and Palestinian leaders amid the story of Mosler Loft's early marketing--he cannot be faulted for irrelevance. He does not miss a beat with such stories -- admirably evoking the practical virtues of voluntarism and mission in building sustainable community.

Although the book's subtitle, *Repairing the World One Building at a Time*, might seem overly incremental and short of comprehensive, *Lofty Pursuits* is an informative read for its complete, implemented example.

In the process of telling one building's story, Schuster evokes a much larger community, without getting lost in overused jargon, or impracticalities of the intangible.

Photo of Mosler Lofts by Benjamin Benschneider, courtesy The Schuster Group

Cross-posted from [Crosscut](#) and [myurbanist](#).

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