

Canada's First "Green" Library

Trish Miller

When the Semiahmoo Library and Community Policing Station opened in September 2003, not only did it offer a much-needed community facility, but it represented innovative building standards. The first "green building" built by the City of Surrey – and the first green library in Canada – has just been certified under the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED 2.1 Green Building Rating System. This system awards certification at the bronze, silver, gold and platinum levels, and this building has received the LEED silver rating.

The Semiahmoo Library is a 22,000 square foot facility built on three levels, with the major public services on the 18,000 square foot second floor above the Community Policing Station. It is Surrey's second largest library and serves as a resource library for the southern part of the city. Features include a large children's area with computers especially for kids and a fire truck in the story corner, quiet and group study rooms, an electronic classroom, comfortable lounge seating and plenty of individual study carrels. Self-service features such as holds pickup and checkout are available.

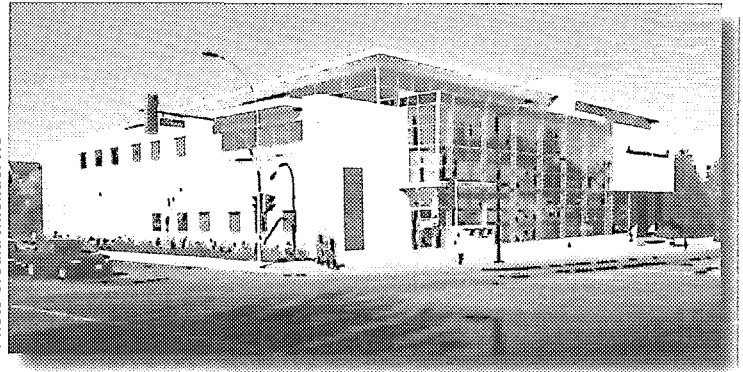
The LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) system assigns points to a wide range of environmental attributes. Features of the Semiahmoo Library and

Community Policing Station include elements to ensure a "sustainable site": prevention of loss of soil during construction; pollution reduction by its proximity to bus transportation, parking capacity meeting minimum zoning requirements and carpool parking spaces; elements to limit heat loss and its effect on the surrounding microclimate and human and wildlife habitat; and lighting designed to limit the spill of illumination beyond the building.

The construction process ensured that at least 50% of the waste materials were recycled, at least 5% of building materials contained recycled content, and at least 20% of the materials used were manufactured within 800 km of the site. The latter requirement has a positive impact on the local economy as well as reducing environmental impacts from transportation.

Water-saving elements include the use of low-maintenance indigenous plants in the landscaping to limit the need to water, and waterless urinals and low-flush toilets in the washrooms to reduce water consumption. The washroom fixtures in the building should save over a million gallons of potable water a year.

Photo credit: Michael Ho



The building's mechanical systems are designed for maximum efficiency, and the second floor was built with a raised plenum for air delivery and wiring flexibility. The building also incorporates features that allow for fresh air intake; gives occupants control of heating, lighting, and ventilation systems; and uses paint, carpet and composite wood products that do not emit contaminants. That pervasive "new building smell" wasn't in evidence on opening day.

The City of Surrey and the building occupants, the RCMP and the Surrey Public Library, are proud of the standards achieved in the building project. They have produced a facility that not only meets the highest environmental standards, but also offers a warm, welcoming environment to all who use it. 🐾

Trish Miller is on a one-year leave from the Semiahmoo Library. She is currently Chief Librarian at Nelson Municipal Library.

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