

Gone Green



The Ferndale Public Library is spreading the good, green word and ironically, they're not doing it through books.



These days, there are more than just books and DVD's to "check out" at the Ferndale Public Library. There are vegetated rooftop gardens, a rainwater reclamation system, and a "gone-green" story that will make you wonder why more libraries aren't built this way.

Motion-sensor lighting, zoned temperature sensors, low-e reflective glass windows, low-flow toilets, and sinks. Some of us have these energy

efficient elements in our homes, but did you know the Ferndale Public Library has implemented these – and more – in their new facility?

The library was treated to a ground-up restoration and expansion in 2010, but a Thanksgiving-day flood damaged it. Following three months of additional work, the library re-opened in February 2011, and it's now beautiful and eco-friendly, outside and in.

From dramatic walls of low-e reflective glass windows that banish heat in summer and retain it in winter to a vegetated rooftop, which functions as a natural insulator and evokes questions like do you have to mow that, the

exterior of the building was designed with functionality in mind.

According to Kate Pohjola, the newly appointed library director, and a self-proclaimed "library lifer" who has worked in libraries since she was 15, the new facility is truly unique – and really efficient.

"We recycle the rain water that comes off the roof," says Ms. Pohjola. "There is a 30,000 gallon cistern under the west entrance of the library that holds the water before it's sanitized and re-used to flush the low-flow toilets and water the limited landscaping that needs it."

Inside, the library is just as green. You'll find motion sensors in all of the bathrooms, work areas, and offices that turn off lights after 22 minutes if there is no activity. Temperature and carbon dioxide sensors in meeting rooms detect

how crowded the space is and adjust the climate accordingly. A geothermal system utilizes the constant temperature of the earth to help heat and cool the library. Products with recycled content are used throughout. And of course, a comprehensive recycling program captures trash and other materials.

"We all have recycling bins in our offices, and the library has a large one that ours get emptied into," says Ms. Pohjola. "We get a lot of cardboard with book shipments, so we can fill a bin quickly."

"My staff and I have also taken it upon ourselves to use hand towels instead of paper towels in the kitchen (we take turns taking them home to wash) and to use a filtered, Brita pitcher in the refrigerator instead of bottled water," says Ms. Pohjola. "We figure anything we can do to contribute to the greening of the library is worth it."

And, while the new library hasn't been operating long enough to know the financial worth of these energy efficiencies, it's estimated that the changes will save nearly \$13,000 in annual costs.

LEEDing The Way to Green...

Designed by architect Seth Penchansky of Penchansky Whisler Architects, the library was always intended to be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified. The library was initially registered to be certified LEED silver, but is actually on track to be certified LEED gold.

In order for a building to be gold certified, it has to earn a total of 60-79 points out of 100 in categories like site sustainability, water efficiency, energy

and atmosphere, and materials and resources – the reuse of an existing structure to avoid construction waste, and the use of regionally located and harvested materials. (The library reused 75% of the existing building structure, and recycled more than 75% of construction-site waste.)

"The project is on target to earn between 69 and 74 points," says Mr. Penchansky. "When you submit a project to the U.S. Green Council, you rarely get all of the points you apply for, but we are getting enough to be solidly gold."

In addition to the features that make the library a green facility, there are others that make it a wonderful place to be, including a 16-computer lab (40 public-accessible computers in

all), WiFi throughout, and a large kids and teens area. There are a monthly book club and "First Stop Friday" – a program where people are encouraged to park at the library and visit before going out to enjoy the local nightlife. With all that is going on, the library has become one of the city's most popular destinations.

"The staff and city residents are equally proud of this building," says Ms. Pohjola. "If you haven't been here yet, you have to come and see it. It feels good to be here – it has a good vibe – and it adds a lot to the neighborhood."

In fact, if you ask people in the area, they'll not only tell you how much the library has done for the community, they'll probably tell you that one of the best stories at this library is its own.



Colorful and spacious public areas, a computer lab, and expansive low-e reflective glass windows help make the Ferndale Public Library both a delight to visit and an extraordinary example of leading-edge energy-efficient architecture and construction.