

## Colour the building boom green

Experts say more and more projects are striving for LEED certification

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Times Colonist

*Saturday, August 16, 2008*

The building boom in Victoria has brought with it more than a labour shortage and increased costs.

According to local developers and architects, it has also seen the explosion of sustainable development and green building practices, with more projects than ever striving for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design certification.

Victoria was an integral part of the genesis of LEED in Canada in 2004 -- a program that rates buildings as certified, silver, gold or platinum based on their energy and environmental performance -- and by virtue of its location, history and necessity, developers say the capital region is poised to lead North America in the development of eco-friendly buildings and communities.



CREDIT: Debra Brash, Times Colonist  
 Neil Connelly, director of campus planning and sustainability, stands in front of the University of Victoria's newest LEED building.

"I have a lot of hope that we are going to outshine North America and be kind of that catalyst that will take everybody to the next level of thinking," said Joe Van Belleghem of Windmill West, owner and partner in the Dockside Green development. The first phase of that project was certified LEED Platinum in June and set a record for LEED points in the process.

The most recent addition to the list of LEED-certified buildings in the city is the University of Victoria's Engineering and Computer Science building, which was certified this week.

The \$25-million, six-storey project is the second building on campus to get such a designation.

Those two additions bring to eight the total of certified projects in Greater Victoria, with 31 others registered to go through the LEED process through their development.

According to the Canada Green Building Council, Vancouver by comparison has 13 certified LEED projects with 87 registered for the process, Calgary has 11 certified with 57 registered, Edmonton has five certified and 27 registered and Toronto has 11 certified and 99 registered.

In the relatively small area of Victoria it's starting to become the norm to hear talk of sustainable building, while the phrase "striving for LEED certification" appears to be part of the lexicon of many of the city's new projects.

And while Van Belleghem points out there are those in the development business simply talking a good game with little or no intention of actually building greener projects -- the "greenwashers," as they are known -- there is a concerted effort among developers to embrace sustainable practices.

"We share a lot of our information with certain developers in town that really want to get into this," he said, noting that is what the green movement is supposed to be about -- creating the connectivity that spurs new and better practices.

Architect Terence Williams, however, suggests even talking about greener and more environmentally sound projects is a good sign.

"People grab onto this thing [LEED], they start talking about things being a LEED building and the general consensus is it's a positive thing," he said.

"And it's a very good thing it's being talked about. Is it a marketing tool? Yes, but I think if that raises the level of awareness and people then proceed and do things better the next time round then it's good news."

Williams also points out it's a sign Victoria is at the epicentre of a new movement in sustainable design and construction of buildings and communities, and according to him that's just part of the city's genetic makeup.

"There is a strong social conscience on the Island, and I think there is certainly an awareness of global warming and a general acceptance of the scientific data that has been presented concerning global warming and the impact on the environment, and people are willing to do something about it and invest some of their time, and yes, their money," he said, noting there is also a culture of creativity here that is actively looking for solutions.

Van Belleghem agrees, noting the Canada Green Building Council was born in Victoria in 2003, a spark that ignited the green building movement across the country.

"In a relatively short period of time Victoria became a real hot spot for its size around green building, though it did lag for a while," he said noting cities like Vancouver, Seattle and Portland were quick to insist on LEED projects for municipal buildings before Victoria climbed on board.

However, Van Belleghem noted the private sector stepped up early on and projects like Dockside started the ball rolling.

"We quickly started to build some really strong capacity in the region, and

when you do that you start attracting more people who want to move here to get involved in green design," he said.

"The green movement in North America, if you track its history, there's no question the roots came out of the West and was quickly adopted by the East," he said. "Both seaboards have really strong green building movements.

"That's partly because seaboards are more urbanized and they are much more aware of the implications for densification, lack of green spaces and the impact of the loss of ecological areas in urban centres. The West Coast has always been a hotbed, we are much more connected to nature, and that's one of the reasons we choose to live here."

Living here, you can't help but soak up that sentiment and start thinking about this kind of development, added Neil Connelly, director of campus planning and sustainability for the University of Victoria.

"I think what you see happening [in building terms] is reflective of people's interests, and I think the university has played a part in that with students coming through different programs and going out into the community," he said, noting when people live on an island they can't help but be concerned about what it takes to survive in isolation. "That gets you thinking about sustainability."

That's why UVic has developed sustainable guidelines for its expansion, with new buildings having to sport extensive green elements if not striving for LEED certification.

The campus now has two LEED Gold buildings and it owns the LEED Platinum Vancouver Island Technology Park, with three other new buildings striving for that LEED Gold status.

But Van Belleghem is quick to point out this is just the beginning.

"I like LEED, it is a great tool, but it is really just one little piece of where we need to move and how we need to think," he said.

"I think we will be the region that will say, 'Yes, LEED is something we should do, but it is only one minor tool of what we really need to address in terms of climate change and the triple bottom line.'"

And he hopes to see the revolving door at Dockside continue, with developers from all around the world coming to see what Victoria is doing and taking that knowledge back to places like China, Italy and Australia.

"I'm hoping with what's happening now, there is a lot of attention globally on B.C., that over the next two years we'll see more change," he said, noting the provincial government's recent green initiatives and directives could spur the movement. "I think this region will be known as the real leader very shortly."

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GREATER VICTORIA LEED REGISTERED BUILDINGS PROJECTS

- Ministry of Technology, Trade and Economic Development offices
- The Raven office building
- Dockside Green Fitness Centre
- Dockside Green Phase 3-2 (high-rise)
- Dockside Green Phase 3-3,4 (high-rise)
- Royal Jubilee Patient Care Centre
- Dockside Green office building
- Dockside Green phase 3-1 (mid-rise)
- Dockside Green office building
- The Estevan mixed use development
- University of Victoria First People House
- 800 Yates St. offices
- 200 Douglas St. highrise
- Farmer Construction head office
- CEI Architecture Planning Interiors office building
- University of Victoria Support Services building
- University of Victoria Social Sciences and Mathematics building
- Radius development
- Pacific Sport Institute facility
- Dockside Green Lands development phase 2 (highrise)
- Municipal House office building
- Tillicum library addition
- Royal Oak Middle School
- St. Margaret's School, new junior school
- Fort Rodd Hill visitor orientation centre
- Burnside Gorge Community Centre
- L'Ecole Brodeur
- Parkside Victoria Resort and Spa
- Jaguar and Land Rover dealership

- Borden Street residences
- Operations Centre, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve

Source: Canada Green Building Council

#### GREATER VICTORIA LEED CERTIFIED PROJECTS

- Vancouver Island Technology Park LEED-Gold, certified Feb. 4, 2002 (first in Canada by more than a year)
- Coast Capital Savings Credit Union at Upper Harbour Place LEED-Certified, certified Sept. 20, 2005
- Operations Centre, Gulf Islands National Park Reserve in Sidney LEED-Platinum, certified July 12, 2006
- University of Victoria Medical Science building, LEED-Gold, certified Aug. 3, 2006
- D'Ambrosio Architecture office, LEED-Gold, certified Aug. 9, 2006
- Capital Regional District Headquarters Phase 2, LEED-Gold, certified Sept. 14, 2007
- Dockside Green Phase 1 - Synergy, LEED-Platinum, certified June 20, 2008
- University of Victoria engineering and computer science building, certified this week

Source: Canada Green Building Council

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