



BUNTING COADY ARCHITECTS

Main spine of office wing showing the main atrium at the NRC Institute for Fuel Cell Innovation.

VANCOUVER GOLD

BY TERESA COADY

AS DESIGNERS we are often asked by our clients to ‘target LEED® Gold’. If it is the client’s first LEED project they are often enthusiastic, but unaware, of the commitment required to achieve this objective. In addition we are also seeing clients and contractors who have been through the expensive LEED process before, only to achieve a disappointing silver accreditation (or less). These clients tell us that they don’t want to do LEED ever again!

That said, our experience in general with LEED has been overwhelmingly positive. Our clients that have achieved Gold are very pleased with the LEED process and seem happy to repeat the experience with us time and again. So, what is the difference? Well, we believe that there are essentially two existing dominant ‘camps’ in our industry and one, very small, evolving camp. It is to this smaller camp that we belong — the camp we would like everyone else to join.

First, there is the ‘Design for Business Camp’. In this camp, everything has to have a payback. LEED Gold cannot cost more than initially specified or the project managers will quickly abandon it. This is the camp of excessive costing and estimating where sustainability is perceived as an additional cost that can be deleted at a stroke if the budget demands. This is the realm of the short-sighted developer and the tightfisted bureaucrat.

The second camp is the ‘High-Design Camp’, which is about creating incredibly cool looking buildings without any real understanding of technical function. This is the land of the add-on feature, the wild and crazy new idea with the dramatic element. In this, the opinion of the designer is that sustainability is not real design; it is a misdirection that must soon be corrected by getting back to real architecture and interior design. This is the camp of building failures: those over-designed, poorly func-

tioning, expensive white elephants that give the design industry a bad name.

We believe that the only way to reconcile these polar extremes is by navigating a middle way, the third way. We believe that architecture and design must fall within the 'Natural Design Camp'. Such living building design is beautiful, timeless, economical and appropriate. Through this third way we strive, with great results, to practice ecologically based design, learning from nature in everything we do.

At the Vancouver Port Authority, Canada's first LEED-CI® Gold, we worked with daylight, sculptural forms and minimalist materials to create a beautiful space with very low embodied and operating energy; a space that can maintain itself indefinitely. At the UBC Life Sciences centre, the largest building in Canada to achieve LEED Gold certification, we created an E shape that passively lights and ventilates the building, dramatically reducing energy costs while creating architectural drama. In all of our projects we aim to seamlessly integrate key sustainable components into the main design. This is particularly the case for the LEED Gold targeted NRC Institute for Fuel Cell Research. Here we have connected fuel cells to lights and photo-voltaics to create a beautiful atrium-style building naturally designed to achieve long term economy and comfort benefits. In fact, during a recent tour, the head of NRC had a hard time demonstrating the key sustainable features of the building as most were not clearly visible to the naked eye!



times are beautiful, well lit, well ventilated and comfortable. They use little or no energy. Surely, with all the resources available to us, we can do far better today? ☐

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To our mind being sustainable is a matter of conscience; the principles should be applied even if no one notices. The LEED Gold targeted Kwantlen University buildings, currently under construction, have underground geothermal central plant systems to radiantly heat and cool the buildings for an ongoing solution to fossil fuel dependency. In the LEED Gold targeted Bentall developments at Broadway Tech Centre we have created a synergy between the building form and the landscaping and water based heating and cooling systems to achieve comfort,

health and timeless energy efficiencies. Likewise, at the LEED Gold targeted Peace Arch Border Crossing we have created a dramatic new natural form to reflect the advanced eco-design of the facility, embracing and expressing *natural design* principles beyond LEED.

In the end, that is what we as designers have been charged with. It is up to us to think beyond the requirements and constraints of today's policy makers and design to sustainable principles. As designers, we are always setting new standards by our thoughtful examples and we have always moved culture forward with our buildings and interiors. The best buildings of ancient

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