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Going green turns to gold

VANOC 2010 HEADQUARTERS SEETON SHINKEWSKI DESIGN GROUP

BY CLARE TATTERSALL
PHOTOS COURTESY ED WHITE PHOTOGRAPHICS

With office vacancy rates of less than 10 per cent for Metro Vancouver and eight per cent in the downtown core, finding a single site to accommodate up to 1,200 staff by 2009 is no easy feat. Fortunately for VANOC, the City of Vancouver was willing to lease two adjoining buildings it had purchased to the Olympic organizing committee — a seven-storey tower and two-storey lowrise. Approximately a year later, after a major renovation of the “tower” by Seeton Shinkewski Design Group (SSDG), VANOC’s new headquarters were move-in ready, bringing 250 people previously working out of separate buildings under one roof.

“Creating a space for a company that grows and then shrinks faster than any other company is extremely challenging,” says SSDG principal Susan Steeves. “So providing maximum flexibility for future growth and change was a key element in the design.”

Simply known as Campus 2010, VANOC’s “tower” includes a health and wellness fitness centre with change rooms, showers, bike storage and drying room for cyclists’ clothing, resource library, retail outlet, offices, a boardroom that seats 38 and 120 workstations. To create a team environment and foster communication — both necessary to successfully plan and execute the pending Winter Games — the workstations were

arranged in pods of four or six in the open office configuration.

“The workstations were designed in such a way that allowed for flexibility and growth as people came and went,” says Steeves, adding the office furnishings and systems also allow for easy reconfiguration.

Provided by Haworth Ltd., the first official supplier of the 2010 Olympics, raised access flooring permits underfloor cabling ideal for VANOC’s sizeable — and growing — IT area, unique desk and system products seamlessly integrate with power and data and moveable walls can easily be restructured or transferred to another location.

Known for its commitment to sustainability, Haworth’s products also helped the 2010 Campus achieve LEED CI (Commercial Interiors) gold certification.

The first Olympic-related project to receive this prestigious rating, the space was designed to maximize interior daylight and views by placing workstations, with their glass panels and low partition heights, in close proximity to exterior windows.

Other ‘green’ strategies and features include (but are not limited to) the introduction of an advanced recycling and organic waste collection program, the use of low-emitting products and materials and the installation of

occupancy and daylight sensors, dual flush toilets, waterless urinals as well as low-flow faucets, which, according to senior designer Sandro Ho, will save 320,000 gallons of water per year.

“Two hundred and fifty light fixtures were (also) removed from the original base building layout,” notes Ho. “That equates to 750 32-watt fluorescent bulbs that would have been utilized unnecessarily.”

In addition to being sustainable, VANOC’s new permanent home is also barrier-free. SSDG went over and above minimum building code and bylaw requirements to ensure physically challenged staff, visitors and athletes can enjoy the new “ice and snow” themed facility.

Providing a neutral backdrop for the client’s graphic team to overlay “the look” of the Games, cool whites dominate the space and can be found on walls, ceilings, doors as well as the 30-foot long reception desk. Split into two to accommodate both administrative and security staff, the reception desk sits atop a polished concrete floor reminiscent of ‘ice.’

“Around the reception area there are strategically designed backlit covers (made of) a white textured resin material that looks like snow,” notes Ho, adding these panels were incorporated into the reception desk itself.

Across from the desk in the middle of the space is a large concrete column. Originally considered an eyesore, the design team decided to work with rather than against the immovable structure. Backlit plasma television monitors were affixed to the column, augmenting VANOC’s graphic branding awareness to staff and visitors.

Though relatively neutral, the space is not devoid of colour. SSDG used the official colours from the Sea-to-Sky theme of the 2010 Games as accents to create a bright, welcoming environment and invigorate staff. Within the seven-storey building, one colour was used on each floor with the ground floor representing the sea and the top floor representing the sky.

Client VANOC

Location Vancouver, B.C.

Design Team Susan Steeves, Sandra Ho, Adrienne Kavanagh

Square Footage 80,000

Project Completion June 2006



**Dominion Fairmile
congratulates SSDG on
their Gold Award for
the VANOC Project**

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