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Waste & Resource Reduction

Smith Carter Sustainable Office Practices

In June 2004, Smith Carter Architects and Engineers Incorporated opened the doors to their innovative and environmentally advanced corporate headquarters. Situated on a five-acre, pie-shaped lot in Winnipeg's south end, the 50,000 square foot building was an opportunity for Smith Carter to tangibly demonstrate how the built environment can be used to increase communication, enhance productivity, improve employee satisfaction, and raise the profile of the company. The building has received critical acclaim winning a Governor General's Medal for Architecture in 2006 and achieving LEED® Platinum Certification in May 2009.

Designed as an active 'beta site' or hands on laboratory, SC3 has since provided the interdisciplinary team of architects, engineers, landscape architects and interior designers an opportunity to test materials, study data and interpret results of sustainable building practices for internal use as well as application to a client's project.

Although initially designed to test then showcase innovations in building practice, it became clear very quickly that Smith Carter needed to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to sustainability, beyond project work, to satisfy both staff and client expectations as well as to fulfill a broader corporate environmental responsibility. In order to ensure a balance of initiatives, the firm has developed a Sustainability Platform that is based on initiatives in three foundational areas: Practice; Environments; and Results.

Practice initiatives support our internal operations and reflect how we behave as a company. From the choice of filtered tap water over plastic bottles to the type of cleaning supplies we use, or our approach to personal transportation, these types of initiatives are focused on the choices we make as corporate citizens.

This balance allows our firm to contribute, in a meaningful way, to an ongoing dialogue, one that goes beyond 'green washing' to seek an understanding of the interplay between systems and the tradeoffs that occur when making sustainable building decisions.

WASTE REDUCTION

Very soon after occupying the new building, Smith Carter recognized that it was critical to try to reduce the amount of waste produced by staff, and perhaps equally effective, control what was done with the waste that was produced. This year, Smith Carter is expecting





to divert 1,320 kilos of material from the landfill by composting food waste products from staff as well as client meetings. Based on the composting of 542 kilos of coffee / tea waste alone in a three month period, the goal is well within reach. Using a commercial composting company allows Smith Carter to compost all food waste produced in the building including all organic material like meat, dairy, bones, napkins and the wooden coffee stir sticks.

Each year Smith Carter hosts approximately 312 meetings where food is served. We have created a policy whereby we seek out caterers that serve locally grown, organic food wherever possible in order to reduce our carbon footprint for food service. To take the policy one step further, Smith Carter does not allow any disposable tableware or

flatware to be brought into the building. We use only ceramic plates and stainless steel cutlery to serve food. All leftover food waste, including napkins are composted and juices in recyclable glass bottles and soft drinks in aluminum cans are recycled.

Every desk is equipped with a recycling bin so staff can recycle paper and aluminum conveniently. Large recycling bins are also provided at all printers, the exit door and in the staff lounge. There are very few traditional garbage cans in the studio as the active recycling/composting program has minimized the requirement waste disposal except in specialized areas of the building for waste that can neither be composted nor recycled.

As host of 22 informal staff parties per year, Smith Carter saw a need to reduce the impact

of waste even further. In 2009, the firm identified a supplier of compostable plates and cutlery and has mandated the use of these products for all staff functions serving large numbers of people. The plates used are made of the sugar cane fibre which is a byproduct of the sugar industry. The fibre, if not used, is burned, therefore, use of the plates not only provides compost, it also reduces air pollution. The compostable cutlery is a corn based plastic that breaks down easily.

Corporately, although water dispensers were installed in the building originally, bottled water was still used in meeting rooms and for visitor consumption. In an effort to ensure continued corporate leadership, an additional reverse osmosis dispenser was installed and

pitchers of water and glassware are now provided in all meeting rooms. Bottled water is no longer purchased, eliminating the need for 3800 plastic bottles per year. As an additional benefit, Smith Carter has realized an annual savings of \$1500 / year (after proportionate equipment costs and an increase in utility bills have been factored).

PRINTING POLICIES

Currently, in Canada, there is no legislation which requires corporations to reduce energy and resource consumption. Nevertheless, Smith Carter is committed to using environmentally responsible production methods in an effort to reduce our ecological footprint. In 2007, we decided that any off-set marketing collateral would be printed using a Forest Stewardship Council (FSC)* certified printer and on FSC certified paper. Additionally, we specify the use of Canola or Soy based inks when available. In order to optimize the use of an 8.5" x 11" sheet, Smith Carter has eliminated the use of full bleed report and proposal covers, and has chosen to print double-sided RFPs when it is permitted.

All high production photocopiers and printers are equipped with the double sided print function, and staff members, when printing is necessary, are encouraged to use the two-sided option.

CONCLUSION

The choice to support sustainable initiatives and make informed choices receives ongoing effort at Smith Carter. Thanks to grass roots investigation by staff members that embrace a green lifestyle and corporate buy-in, our operational practices have evolved and become a source of pride for the organization. The awareness is growing and the renaissance in thought process brought on by inhabiting a LEED® Platinum certified building has created a passion for the environment that has benefitted our practice, our clients and the broader community.



ABOUT THE FSC

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