El Cerrito Recycling + Environmental Resource Center

El Cerrito, California

Architectural Response

Our goal was to create a recycling and environmental resource center that brings people and community together, inspires better awareness, and satisfies operational needs in creative ways. The El Cerrito Recycling Center is a story about regeneration and restoration.

The design echoes the industrial function of the facility – incorporating corrugated steel, reclaimed wood, and other highly sustainable and durable materials. Every component of the design fulfills multiple functions and each is integral to the overall system, creating a cohesive set of forms. The aesthetic is contemporary, clean, and composed of materials that will last.

The resilient design builds in durability as well as a capacity to change, grow and adapt to new uses, new technologies, and new imperatives, including climate change, social change and seismic or ecological events. The center itself is recyclable, designed for deconstruction and reuse when it is no longer needed. Its wood and steel structural systems are easy to unbolt and reorganize.

Social Response

We focused on creating a strong sense of place for the community. Everywhere the public goes is welcoming, a great place for the gathering and interaction of the Center's diverse users and visitors.

Our team took extraordinary efforts to harvest rainwater, store it, and re-use it for various functions to achieve extremely low potable water use. The design includes the installation of a large, 11,000 gallon, water storage tank adjacent to the public space. The tank is filled with rainwater from roof catchment areas and used to flush toilets and urinals, irrigate landscaped areas and, potentially supply make-up water for the truck wash. This system is a central part of the environmental message we are communicating to the public.

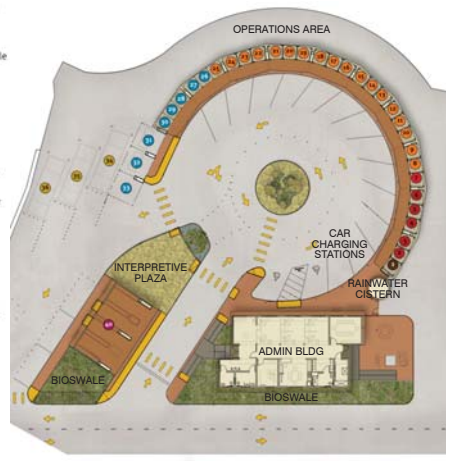
The main energy goal is to provide a net-zero energy facility. To achieve this goal the Administration Building incorporates passive design strategies in concert with high efficiency equipment and offsets the anticipated energy use with on-site renewable energy sources. The net-zero energy use makes a significance difference over the lifespan of the project. All in all, our team invested a great deal in reducing the embodied energy in this project, exceeding basic project requirements.

Urban Response

In the past, we made a mark on the land by physically changing the landscape and moving it around to better suit the needs of humans. And then ultimately, when we could extract no more from the land, we simply moved on, leaving a scar, a hole, a reminder of how we used the land. Today, our mark is still physical and tangible, but it is less about what we take away and the scar we leave behind. It is more about the environment we envision – restored to what was before, or as close as we can get it. We make our mark by trying to be less visible in how we touch the land.

The new El Cerrito Recycling and Environmental Resource Center embodies this holistic way of looking at our world. From the materials that are collected here and either shared with other community members, or recycled into other materials, the Center allows further reductions in what we need to take from the earth.

- Disabled access area
  place acceptable materials here if you are disabled / need assistance
- Food donations
- Medicines / pharmaceuticals
- Medical sharps in approved containers (available in office)
- Fluorescent bulbs, CFLs and tubes (fees may apply)
- Batteries (household and auto)
- Motor oil and filters
- Used cooking oil
  (for biodiesel)
- Electronics, including:
  - Computers and all peripherals
  - Microwaves
  - Ink cartidges
  - Cell phones
  - CDs, DVDs, tapes
  - Small appliances
  - Televisions and monitors
- Paint (coming winter 12/13)
- Cardboard
- Cardboard
- Cardboard
- Paper (mixed)
- Paper (mixed)
- Office paper (white)
- Newspaper
- Aluminum (cans)
- Glass bottles (green)
- Glass bottles (brown)
- Glass bottles (clear)
- Milk and juice cartons / aseptic packaging (rinsed)
- Plastic (#1 bottles)
- Plastic (#2 bottles)
- Plastics (all rigids / containers)
- Plastics (all bags and films)
- Polystyrene foam
  (hard, block, white)
- Vacant
- Plate glass (tempered or not)
- Plexiglass
- Vacant
- Packaging supplies e.g. bubble wrap and "peanuts"
  (free, for reuse)
- Bicycles and parts
  (free, for reuse)
- Scrap metal and large appliances (no CFCs)
- "Tin" and Steel Cans
- Aluminum (pans, foil & scrap)
- Pallets (reuseable)
- Reusable household items for Goodwill Including:
  - Clothing
  - Scrap Linens / Textiles
  - Sporting Goods
  - Small Furniture
- Carpet, residential only
  (fees apply)
- Reuseable building materials
  (reusable, for Urban Ore)
- Garden pots
- Compost for sale
  (see staff for details)
- Mulch for sale
  (see staff for details)
- Exchange Zone for:
  - Art & schoolsupplies
  - Office supplies
  - Books and magazines
  - Reusable CDs, DVDs, tapes
  - Corks
  - Eyeglasses (for Lions Club)
  - Toys and games



Energy Facts

The administrative building exceeds California's Title-24 Energy Code by 27.3 % and exceeds the LEED energy cost model by 73.71%. When operated in passive mode, coupled with the on-site renewable energy (12 KW photovoltaic array), the building's annual energy use is anticipated to be less that the annual energy produced by the PV array. The project achieved LEED Platinum using LEED 2009 v3. The project earned 19 of 19 available LEED points for Energy Performance (EAc1) and 7 of 7 available LEED points for On-Site Renewable Energy (EAc2).

Photos by David Wakely

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