Center for Urban Waters

The Center for Urban Waters, a 51,000-square-foot lab and office building, is located on the east side of the Thea Foss Waterway. This City of Tacoma facility houses the City’s Environmental Services labs and offices, University of Washington Tacoma research labs, and offices for the Puget Sound Partnership. This collaboration brings together researchers, implementers and policymakers to develop and apply the best possible science to restoring and protecting Puget Sound.

The site includes a public esplanade and a 75-foot dock to accommodate water-monitoring vessels.

Building facts

- Location: East side of the Thea Foss Waterway at 326 East D Street, across from downtown Tacoma, WA
- Size: Three-story building, approximately 51,000 square feet, including about 36,000 square feet of office space and 12,000 square feet of lab space
- Construction cost: $22 million
- Completed: April 2010

Building occupants

- The City’s Environmental Services Division analytical labs and engineering offices
- University of Washington Tacoma labs for research led by Dr. Joel Baker, the Port of Tacoma Chair in Environmental Science and Professor, UWT
- Offices for the Puget Sound Partnership, the state agency established in 2007 to lead efforts to protect and restore Puget Sound

Sustainability

The Center for Urban Waters has been awarded LEED® Platinum (v2.2) certification, the highest possible designation under the U.S. Green Building Council’s Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design green building certification system. LEED® is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high-performance buildings.
**Water efficiency**

- Facility uses 46% less water than a conventional facility.
- A 12,000-square-foot green roof absorbs rainfall and filters pollutants from the air and rainwater.
- Two 36,000-gallon tanks collect stormwater from the green roof and water rejected from the laboratory’s pure water system.
- Water collected in the tanks is used to flush toilets and irrigate plants.

**Energy savings**

- Facility uses 34% less energy than a standard building
- Ground source heat pump uses the constant temperature of underlying groundwater to heat and cool the building. This is accomplished by 84 geothermal wells, each approximately 280 feet deep, under the esplanade and parking lot.
- Motorized exterior shades on the west side of the building are programmed to automatically adjust to daylight levels throughout the day.

**Materials**

- Timbers salvaged from the old Tacoma Municipal Dock were remilled and used on walls and ceilings in the lobby and conference rooms.
- Old granite curbs, recovered from street improvement projects, were recycled into benches.
- More than 99% of the waste generated during construction was recycled.
- Low VOC (volatile organic compound) adhesives, sealants, paints, coatings, carpet and wood reduce the level of potentially toxic or harmful organic chemical compounds that can enter the atmosphere as gases or vapor.

**Habitat**

- Cedar and Douglas fir snags along the waterfront provide staging, feeding and nesting habitat for birds and small animals.
- Native and adapted plants require less water and fertilizers, provide habitat for birds and animals, and protect water quality in Puget Sound.

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**For more information:**
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**Center for Urban Waters Sustainable Strategies**

1. green roof
2. summer sun
3. winter sun
4. water storage tanks
5. irrigation from storage tanks
6. rain garden
7. natural ventilation
8. ground source heat and cool
9. radiant floor
10. excess clean water from labs
11. flush toilets from storage tanks

**Courtesy of Perkins+Will**