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PROPERTIES

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OCTOBER contents 2011

features

RIZE ALLIANCE PROPERTIES 8

"I believe a building should be more than just a place to live," says William Lin, president and CEO. "It should be a statue, an art form. When someone sees it for the first time, they should be able to say: that just made my day. But to connect on such a fundamental level, a building must also provoke and engage — something you can't do if you're working under the constraints of conventional design."



.....On the Cover
Rize Alliance

19



8

WINDOWS 15

Special Feature: Sultry and seductive, bold and dramatic, or presenting a quiet, understated elegance, windows are sometimes described as the eyes of a building. And in a market where consumers insist on ever more natural light in their homes and work environments, windows have become an architectural focal point — an integral component of overall design.

BC Hydro's New Construction Program (NCP) The Atrium: 19

A Lesson in How to Combine Green Building and Great Design With help from NCP, the Atrium design team began by completing an extensive energy modeling study that compared what the Atrium would be like with or without energy-efficient design. The result — with energy-efficiency measures installed — was an estimated energy savings of about 2.4 million-kilowatt hours a year, enough to power 220 homes. Put another way, the modeling proved that the building would use 60 per cent less energy than a comparable office tower built to current building code requirements.

DOLLAR AND SENSE OF SUSTAINABLE BUILDING 21

Green Editorial: The Dollars and Sense of Sustainable Building With higher revenues, lower costs, satisfied occupants and reduced emissions, it is difficult to understand why all buildings aren't going green.

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION 23

Now senior vice president of marketing with Ledingham McAllister, Manuela's career spans the entire North American continent from Vancouver to Seattle and San Diego, from East Coast USA to Port Coquitlam and Whistler.

SOCIAL MEDIA 26

An Effective Way For Builders to Connect With Women Home Buyers.

WHAT WOMEN HOME BUYERS WANT 27

The age-old question "What do women want?" Since studies show women make most of the home-buying decisions. Naturally, the next question to arise is, once you figure out what they want, how do you reach them and sell to them?

FROM THE PUBLISHER

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This month we are very proud to showcase RIZE ALLIANCE.

See page 4, [Rize Alliance](#)

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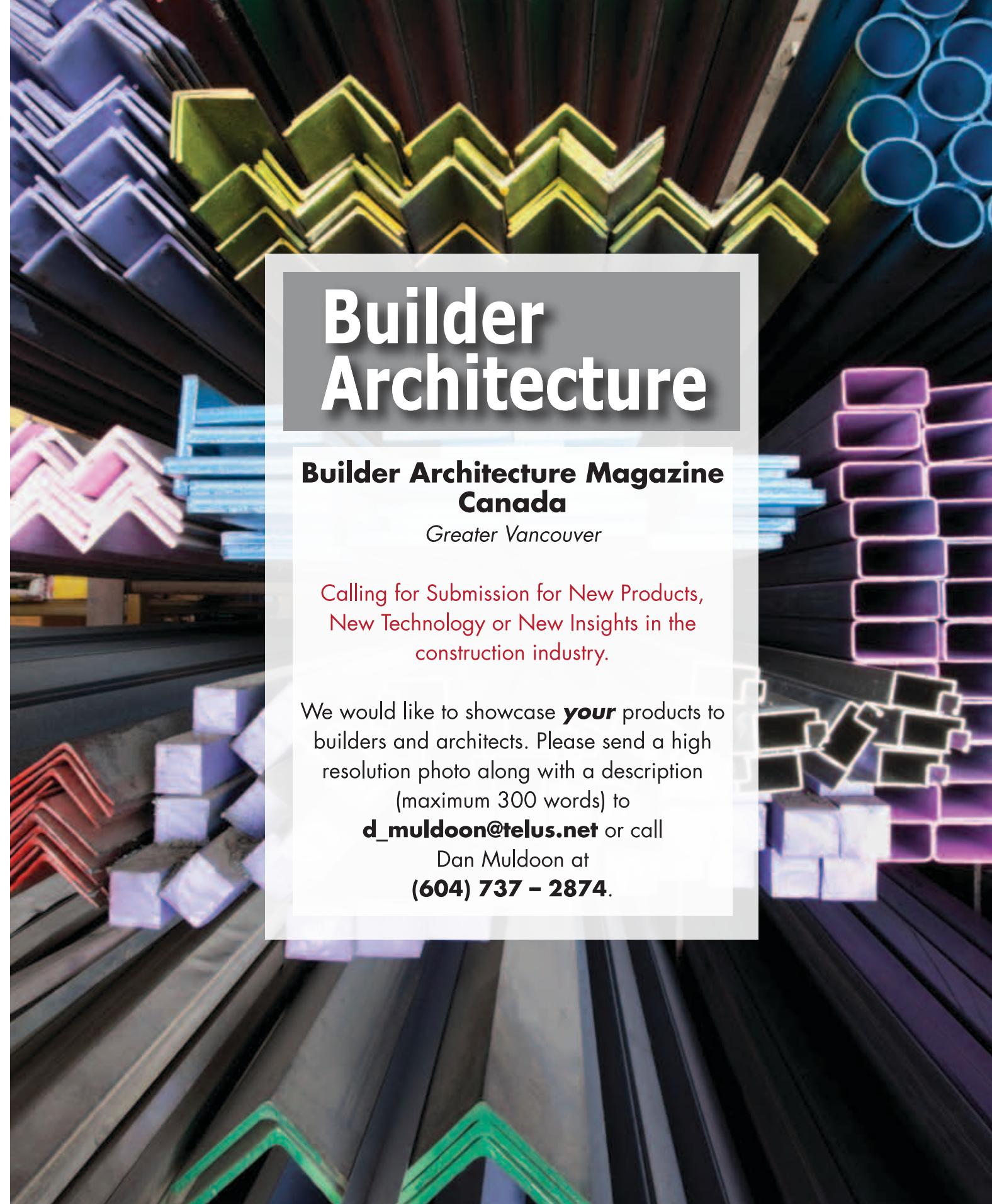
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Rize Alliance

by Susan M Boyce



Jhe head office is über-modern: soft white walls with textured steel and dramatic orange-tangerine accents. People here at Rize Alliance smile frequently and from the heart. The ambiance is elegant, efficient, tranquil.

Yet there's no question, this office is also filled with a playfulness, a whimsical imagination that sets it apart. Rize Alliance does not follow trends. In fact, it could be argued the Vancouver-based company doesn't actually set new trends because their

designs are so refreshingly innovative, so outside the box, few would be daring enough to attempt to replicate them.

"I believe a building should be more than just a place to live," says William Lin, president and CEO. "It should be a statue, an art form. When someone sees it for the first time, they should be able to say: that just made my day. But to connect on such a fundamental level, a building must also provoke and engage — something you can't do if you're working under the constraints of conventional design."

On our way to the boardroom, Will pauses to point out the model of Rize's newest undertaking, a proposed residential mid-rise in Surrey. At first glance, the façade reminds me of white water rippling over a pebbled embankment. Closer inspection, however, reveals a geometric precision, a futuristic symmetry to the curves and angles that somehow blends a sense of movement with an undeniable sense of grounding and solidity: unique, beautiful, definitely provocative.

"We love to be a catalyst for change in emerging neighbourhoods," Will

explains, adding he believes Surrey Central is on the verge of becoming one of the Lower Mainland's most cosmopolitan areas. Aimed squarely at Surrey's burgeoning investor and first time buyer markets, this new project will be "cool, playful, and hip — designed specifically to attract the younger generation and investors." He also anticipates more than 75 percent of the suites will be priced under \$250,000.

Re-Imagining Yaletown

With a construction portfolio approaching \$1 billion, the Rize story is, surprisingly, still relatively unknown. Yet its beginning marked the start of Yaletown's evolution from rundown warehouse district to its now enviable status as one of Vancouver's hottest residential neighbourhoods.

The year was 1992. "An architect friend suggested going 50/50 on a development site on Hamilton Street. I was young and eager, and I immediately got very excited," Will says, apparently totally unaware he's radiating a charming, still youthful enthusiasm as he speaks. "My dad had always been interested in real estate investment, so I called him and very, very reluctantly, he agreed to loan me the cash. It wasn't until years later I found out he actually thought he was kissing his money goodbye."

Although Will's friend wasn't able to raise his half, Will eventually struck his own deal with the vendor to develop 1238 Hamilton Street, Yaletown's first residential building — a collection of avant-garde live/work lofts — as a joint

venture. "The day we signed the papers, I immediately gave myself a promotion to Vice President of Garbage Removal." Will laughs fondly at the memory. "I got myself a pair of gloves and a container, and I was on that site every single day; watching, learning, and picking up construction garbage. It was such an education —

I'll always be grateful."

The project sold out within months of completion, Will repaid every cent of the loan from his father, and promptly set his sights on another "impossible" site: the historic Canadian Linen Building located just around the corner at Richards and Davie.





Naysayers and consultants scoffed at Will's original vision of transforming the space into a public market predicting it would take a decade or more to overcome the area's lack

of parking and population. But Will persevered.

Working closely with city planner Robert Lemon, he helped adapt the City of Vancouver's Heritage

Revitalization Agreement (HRA), recently created to preserve the historic Vancouver Public Library at Burrard and Georgia, for residential applications. By retaining the original

heritage structure along the site's north edge, Rize could now build a 29-storey residential tower named, appropriately, Metropolis.

Created by Stuart Howard Architects and boasting a full display suite by interior designer superstar, Robert Ledingham, the iconic, \$27 million building offered a new spin on Art Deco elements plus an unprecedented 85 two-storey lofts priced at \$230 per square foot. And when Choices Market stepped up to become the anchor tenant, Will achieved his goal of a neighbourhood grocery store accessible by foot to the increasing number of people who chose to call Yaletown home.

New Challenges

From 2004 to 2006, Rize brought their now considerable visionary expertise to the office/commercial sector. First came the \$18 million Cosette Building, Yaletown's first premium office building, follow by the \$13.2 million London Building on Pender, a hybrid heritage office





tower and private school, and the \$18.5 million Alder Crossing neighbourhood mall in South Surrey.

But Will stresses the company's three core values remained unaltered. "First, a project must be driven by our passion — it must be something we all look

forward to working on every single day. Second, it must be the type of construction we're good at, and third, it must make economic sense. We call it the Ríze Zone... or sometimes the Ríze Sweet Spot," he says with what looks remarkably like a playful wink.



Lemons to Lemonade

Will describes Ríze's return to residential construction as "the project that taught me the most — about construction, about people, and about life."

Envisioned as 21st Century urban village, the \$72 million Centro tower introduced a dynamic new architecture to the exploding Richmond apartment marketplace. From the street, elongated rectangular accents in apple green and turquoise glass seem to dance across the façade — it's a happy look, as if a stranger has flashed a smile at me for no apparent reason. Floor plans included a series of innovative SkyHomes — think two-storey townhome elevated seven floors above street-level and with private garage access on both levels directly from the secure parkade.

Sales began strong, fueled by a combination of the creative design and the 2007 consumer's frenzied desire to get into the market while they still



could. Then came the crash of 2008. "Within just a few months, we went from an environment of high costs, high demand, and low availability of tradespeople to one where the market for new homes was nonexistent," Will says. "It was a big adjustment."

Once again, though, he turned adversity to advantage. "It was a major investment, but we took all our construction trades in-house and today we still have all except a couple of them working with us. Having our own crews allows more clarity because you remove the extra layer that comes with relying on a general contractor."

Looking Ahead

It's been a long way from the days when it was just Will Lin, Vice President

of Garbage Removal, his gloves, and his container cleaning up onsite. In addition to an expanding team of onsite trades and sub-trades, 26 people now work full time in Ríze Alliance's downtown Vancouver head office.

incredible change much the same way Robson Street did 15 or 20 years ago," he says, adding he expects this sassy, fun-loving mid-rise will follow the Ríze tradition of being a catalyst for change.

Even the floor plans introduce a different twist to urban living. "Rather than simply giving a choice of two colour schemes, we're offering two completely different versions of the same floor plan — The Yale for people who want a more traditional bedroom, dining room, and living room configuration, and The Cecil,

a totally different interpretation for people with a lifestyle that demands the open-concept, interconnectivity of West Coast Modernism."

With one of the quick-witted descriptions I've come to expect

from him, Will adds, "The Cecil will be rather like the sexy cousin. We've pulled the bedroom back from the exterior wall and used curtains to partition it off so you practically double your day-to-day living space — after all, a lot of city dweller don't care if they can see out a window when they're asleep." Works for me.

He's also about to shake things up on Terminal Street where a campus-style office/commercial building named Containers should be underway in the near future.



photo by Derek Lepper

And if you're wondering where Will's seemingly endless creative inspiration comes from, here's part of his secret — reading biographies. "In just a few hours, I can cherry pick from the experience and expertise it took someone 50 or 60 years to accumulate," he says.

When asked why he retains such a playful attitude to life and construction, Will simply smiles. "That would be rather like asking an elephant why he's big."

Rize Alliance is found on the web at www.rize.ca. □

Windows

by Susan M Boyce

Sultry and seductive, bold and dramatic, or presenting a quiet, understated elegance, windows are sometimes described as the eyes of a building. And in a market where consumers insist on ever more natural light in their homes and work environments, windows have become an architectural focal point — an integral component of overall design.

Colourful Outlook

Savvy manufacturers are responding with products to satisfy the demand for beauty and style along with

functionality, and colour is right at the top of the list when it comes to the way today's best-dressed windows are built. "More attention is being paid to visual appeal than ever before — especially in custom homes where over 50 percent of windows are painted to match the doors," acknowledges Casey Kerkhoff, owner of Westeck Windows & Doors and a 39-year veteran of the industry.

Bill Snyder, general branch manager with Langley-based Starline Windows, agrees noting that while black has replaced traditional beige or white as the exterior colour of choice in many applications, consumer





Designed for Comfort

One product making a splash in the market is Starline's Rainshield System, an innovation Snyder says was designed specifically for our "Wet Coast" climate. Rather than the traditional caulking joint, this window system incorporates a flexible gasket as the water barrier between the frame and the side of the building. The nose of the window extends out from the flange to create the necessary gap and allows triple glazing and double Low-E.

"We design all our own products, and we never stop," Snyder says, adding the Rainshield design came about during a period when the economy was slow and many other manufacturers were retrenching. He laughs. "Actually, our greatest challenge with this product is that it's so innovative, there's no competition yet. It might not seem like a problem, but it means builders can't get comparative pricing."

Net Zero is Coming

Our love affair with windows, however, comes at a cost: decreased energy efficiency. Natural Resources Canada research indicates windows account for up to 30 percent of the heat loss from a conventional home, and during winter a typical window loses up to 10 times more heat than an equivalent area of outside wall. There is also increasing anecdotal evidence to suggest between 30 and 40 percent of North America's energy consumption is related to heating and cooling our buildings.

As the global movement toward environmental stewardship continues, pressure on manufacturers increases steadily to design windows with better energy efficiency and thermal performance. Both Canada and the United States

are committed to a goal that all new construction will be Net Zero by the year 2020. Here in BC, a series of stringent new regulations are part of the government's ongoing strategy to make that goal reality.

These changes have already led Westeck to develop a new breed of vinyl frame suitable for residential and commercial glazing applications. "Typically, these applications have utilized thermally broken, aluminum curtain wall glazing," Kerkhoff explains.

"Thanks to improved U-values combined with lower cost, our new PVC Veka/Euro vinyl curtain wall is replacing the aluminum curtain wall and creating a substantial change in the market."

Kerkhoff says reasons for this shift are numerous — starting with performance. "Curtain wall PVC windows outperform thermal break aluminum windows because of PVC's substantially lower heat transfer rate. A typical thermal break aluminum window has a frame

U-Value of 3.40 metric or 0.60, whereas in a typical vinyl window, the frame U-Value is only 1.70 metric or 0.30," he notes, adding an excellent resource for technical data is found at www.vekainc.com.

Additionally, Kerkhoff says, aluminum thermal break windows are mechanically joined and thus susceptible to dry shrinkage and condensation. "The long term results of condensation and leaky thermal break aluminum windows are mold, mildew, fungus, rotting, decay, and

sick buildings. Vinyl windows are welded, meaning they're watertight and can't leak water from wind driven rain or condensation through frame joinery. Plus, they have such low heat transfer rates that the interior surface temperature of the vinyl doesn't allow condensation to form even at relatively high humidity."

This fall, the 2010 BC Building Code will come into effect requiring all windows to have a maximum U-value of 2W/m²/°K and to

continued on page 18



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Key Date Oct 25, 2011	awards reception hosted by Mayor Dianne Watts
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The inaugural Award Program is open to projects completed anytime after Jan 1, 2001, and citizens, or any member of project development teams, may submit a nomination.

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Visit the [NewCity Design Awards](#) website for info about competition categories, submission requirements, and details on sister awards in: Beautification, Sustainability, Social Planning and Clean Energy.

www.surrey.ca/awards 

The Atrium:

A Lesson in How to Combine Green Building and Great Design



Building Green Resources

Local resources, incentive programs and selected, helpful web links that will help you in your green building or renovations projects.

Light House Sustainable Building Centre (Vancouver)

Light House is a Vancouver-based information centre that hosts a weekly free Guest Expert series with sustainable building professionals speaking on various topics, including landscaping and gardening. Check their schedule of upcoming workshops.

Special Features continued from page 17

display a label indicating the product has been certified by an accredited, independent agency — it is already illegal for a business to sell non-compliant windows. Three additional cycles of code amendments are anticipated in 2012, 2015, and 2020 — each one introducing significantly more aggressive energy management provisions.

Al Jaugelis, technical director at Innotech Windows + Doors and past president of the Window and Door Manufacturers' Association of BC (WDMA-BC), says he's delighted BC lawmakers chose to consult with industry as part of the process to develop these new, eco-savvy regulations. "Some provinces simply decreed

changes. Here, government responded to our concerns and gave us time to adapt as the [first round of] new regulations were rolled out."

A committed participant and industry representative in the discussion, Jaugelis sums up the benefits of the move toward Net Zero. "Windows are thin, transparent elements that aren't great at keeping heat in. Yes, most walls have R12 insulation, but when you factor in the windows, you've probably only got an R-factor of two or three. By increasing windows' energy efficiency, the aggregate impact on energy consumption for the province is enormous." □

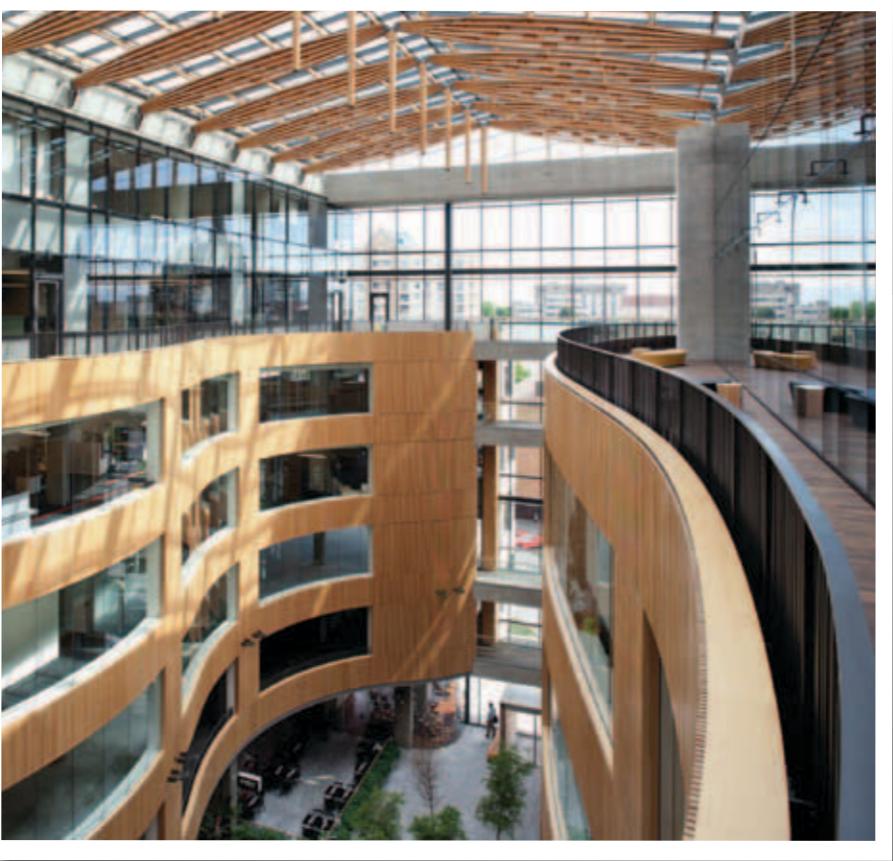
Occupying one full city block in downtown Victoria, on Blanshard Street between Johnson and Yates, the Atrium has injected a new and exciting vibe to a town not known for cutting-edge architecture. Since it opened in August 2010, it's won awards for design, prime tenants for long-term leases, and thousands of repeat customers for its main floor restaurants and retail stores — all local businesses.

"It's spectacular, actually," says Fran Hobbis, Manager of Corporate Services for British Columbia Ferry Services Inc., the building's anchor tenant occupying nearly half of the building's

17,400 square metres of Class A office and retail space, "and our employees absolutely love it. It's open, it's bright, there's natural light flooding through everywhere and it just feels like a healthy place to work."

It's also, says Karen Jawl, Manager of Operations for owner/developer, Victoria's Jawl Properties Ltd., "one of the most energy-efficient buildings in North America."

Jawl Properties and their architect, Franc D'Ambrosio, set out to create a building that would "contribute to the city beyond



the usual concrete and steel,” she says. “Franc had a good sense of vision and pushed for what he believed. We all agreed, too, that this building had to target LEED® Gold standard”—which is why the design team signed up for BC Hydro’s New Construction Program (NCP) at the very start of the design process.

With help from NCP, the Atrium design team began by completing an extensive energy modeling study that compared what the Atrium would be like with or without energy-efficient design. The result – with energy-efficiency measures installed – was an estimated energy savings of about 2.4 million-kilowatt hours a year, enough to power 220 homes. Put another way, the modeling proved that the building would use 60 per cent less energy than a comparable office tower built to current building code requirements.

It’s that kind of significant energy savings that

has lead other developers and designers to the NCP in record numbers. Program enrolment has doubled over the past 12 months and, in the last two years alone, more than 50 new buildings in B.C. have

continued on page 22

The Dollars and Sense of Sustainable Building

by Tye Spicer, Light House

With higher revenues, lower costs, satisfied occupants and reduced emissions, it is difficult to understand why all buildings aren’t going green.

While the development of new high performance buildings is growing thanks to the adoption of more stringent building codes coupled with progressive developers addressing a shifting public demand, it is the older building stock that holds the largest opportunity for emission reductions and efficiency. New buildings account for only about 2–3 per cent of the stock of existing buildings each year, and with their inefficiencies, older buildings are responsible for the lion’s share of GHG emissions.

Research lauding the upsides of retrofitting older building stock cites numerous benefits. These come not only in the form of lower operating expenses through energy efficiency upgrades but in evidence showing retrofitted buildings leasing up more quickly with tenants willing to pay a premium in exchange for higher employee productivity, improved air quality, improved employee health, lower utility costs (depending on the lease structure) and increased public goodwill.

It would stand to reason that “greening” our building stock would be an effective way to curb emissions and reduce the demand for power. After all, the built environment is responsible for more GHG emissions than either the transportation or industrial sectors, which represent much more visible targets. Buildings in which North Americans live and work are estimated to produce 39% of total emissions while consuming up to 70% of total electricity.

The largest single barrier to increased investment behind green building is a fundamental gap in knowledge with respect to how certain environmental features of a building impact current future investment values and performance. As a portfolio manager for one of Canada’s largest institutional investors put it, in stark contrast to much academic research, “There’s no strong economic case for going green, it’s just a



cost of doing business. It’s purely tenant driven, you’re buying a sticker for the side of your building that communicates to prospective tenants that you look after your building. It’s purely optics and branding.” Is this the case or is the real estate investment community not doing their homework to truly understand the value of green? Either way, as soon as a strong market link can be made between environmental performance and investment performance, it becomes the fiduciary duty of investment professionals to understand the environmental performance of their assets. In other words, going green is only relevant once it can be proved that it generates financial returns.

Gathering sufficient data is an onerous task and, without fully understanding the potential upside, many property owners are loathe to record the numerous data points and fill out the seemingly endless questionnaires which would create a better understanding of the relationship between building performance and value. The uncertainty surrounding the value of green building creates risk, and without having a clear picture of the financial reward, property investors have been understandably cautious in their approach.

continued on page 24

continued from page 20

been built to high energy-efficiency standards. Together, these buildings are saving 32 gigawatt hours of electricity per year, enough to power 3,200 homes.

"You've got to listen to the market to be successful," says Karen Jawl, "and the market wants green. We are very cognizant of energy use and managing energy use effectively. If we can offer lower operating costs, it makes us a more competitive landlord. If we can offer great design, well, that's even better."

Says BC Ferries' Fran Hobbs, "This building supports our core values for environmental sustainability, but even more than that, we just love it and the amenities we've never had before, like windows that open and daylight and bike storage and changing rooms with showers. We expect reduced absenteeism because people are happy to come to work here. We've even heard a rumour that people want to work for BC Ferries because they get to work in the Atrium!"

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Earthships (International)

This home design is the invention of a New Mexico architect. Earthships are energy-efficient and the construction materials are mostly recycled as well. There is also a film, Garbage Warrior, about Earthships and their inventor.

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Insulating Your House (National)

The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has a downloadable PDF on Insulating Your House, as well as other insulation information available on their website. For more information, read about insulation in our Home Heating and Home Cooling guides.

PassivHaus dwellings (International)

PassivHaus, or passive house dwellings, are highly energy efficient, requiring little to no heating or cooling inputs. While not common in North America yet, the first certified PassivHaus in Canada is being built as part of the Avalon Ecovillage near Kelowna, B.C.

Women in Construction

By Susan M. Boyce

Manuela Mirecki
Zest for Construction

Now senior vice president of marketing with Ledingham McAllister, Manuela's career spans the entire North American continent from Vancouver to Seattle and San Diego, from East Coast USA to Port Coquitlam and Whistler. She's survived the construction frenzy of the dot.com boom years and the inevitable crash that followed, has successfully branded product ranging from urban pied-à-terres to lavish executive penthouses, and has been a driving force in transforming tracts of bare land

continued on page 25

Articulate and elegant, Manuela Mirecki's contagious smile and sheer enthusiasm for life fill any room. In other words, she's got presence.

But make no mistake, beneath her self-assured charm lies a strength of will combined with an ethical commitment to excellence that are unbendable. This is one tough lady who knows her stuff and refuses to settle for second best — from herself or from the people around her.





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Green Editorial continued from page 21

While the financial sector in Europe is taking a proactive approach to incorporating environmental criteria into the risk analysis of building projects, Canadian financial institutions continue to be agnostic towards green elements leaving it to developers to incorporate cost and benefits into traditional pro formas. Some mechanisms, including PACE bonds, ESCO's and revolving loan funds, have been developed to incentivize the development of green buildings and retrofitting of existing stock. Unfortunately, the uptake in the marketplace of these mechanisms has been tepid, at best, as real estate investors still struggle to fully understand the relationship between green building and value.

With knowledge as the stumbling block, cooperation between all concerned stakeholders is necessary if we are to enjoy the many benefits that green buildings promise. In an effort to facilitate such meaningful dialogue, Light House is hosting a panel discussion on September 14th at UBC's Robson Square Theatre on green building financing as part of their quarterly Market Insights breakfast seminar series, "Following the Money: Financing Green Building and Retrofits" will bring together industry leaders and key decision makers to discuss the issues facing green building finance. In conjunction



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with the September event, Light House will be releasing a report surveying the views of financial representatives on the financing of green buildings and retrofits in Canada.

With their role in Vancouver's own Greenest City Initiative, and their potential role in mitigating climate change, green buildings have both local and global relevance. A better understanding of how investments in environmental performance can generate economic returns just might be the key to growing the industry; after all, money talks. □

into vibrant, multi-generations communities. Oh, yes, she's also probably done more different onsite, manual labour jobs than most of her male counterparts.

In our inaugural Women in Construction feature, Manuela talks frankly about the industry she's been enamoured with since her earliest memories of standing beside her father on a construction site when she was only four.

Q: Let's start with one of the controversial issues. Is it more difficult for women to succeed in the construction industry than it is for men?

A: I hear people talk about the construction industry's glass ceiling all the time... and I say rubbish. In fact, I often feel it's an advantage being a woman in a male dominated industry. If everyone at a meeting is wearing beige and one person shows up wearing red, which person is the one that people going to remember? I make a point of being female because I want to be identified by my skills not my gender.

Sure, occasionally I still walk into a room filled with trades and suppliers, and when they see me arrive wearing a designer dress, high heels, and red lipstick, they might initially dismiss me. But the minute I substantiate my level of knowledge and show them exactly how that expertise is going to help them achieve their goals, they buy in. There's no way I've ever felt excluded because of my gender.

That said though, kudos definitely have to go to Ward [McAllister] as CEO of this company, because out of the 50-plus developers I've worked with throughout my career, not one of them has ever maintained as strong a female presence as Ledingham McAllister. Out of the 25 to 30 people who typically work out of our head office, only five are men... and one of them is Ward.

Q: Still, there must be a few "horror stories" after almost 25 years in this field?

A: A few... yes.

Q: How did they come about and what happened?

A: Well, very early in my career, I applied for a position as a purchaser with a major lumber company. They told me flat out that I met their criteria, but they wouldn't hire me because I was a woman and would be dealing with cultures that don't deal with women. I told them I wouldn't work for a company with that attitude and walked out.

Then there was one job where, after a grueling series of interviews both on the phone and in person, I was hired as the only female salesperson for a new apartment project in presales. I'm still convinced it was all about shaking things up and inciting the men. Within a couple of months I'd become the top ranking salesperson on the floor, but the whole thing created a very hostile environment.

Q: What's your favourite part of the construction industry?

A: Housing is the most tangible and meaningful product in the world because everyone needs a roof over their head.

Women in Construction continued from page 23

Being an active part of creating environments to enhance people's lives is a perfect fit for me.

And I still love to get in there and get my hands dirty. More than a few times I've had to go in the morning before we open a sales centre and do things like install lighting fixtures or unclog toilets in the display suite. Plus I create all the original paintings for our display homes.

Q: What's your advice to the next generation of women in construction?

A: First of all, always be lead by your passion. When I was a child, the only reason I wanted to have dolls like the other girls did was so I could build dollhouses for them. In fact, the only time I ever really got into trouble as a kid was when I got caught playing with my dad's tools. Even now, I'm the one who's the handyman at home — if it's a tool or a piece of equipment like the compound miter saw and drill press, it belongs to me. Then you need to make yourself as knowledgeable as you possibly can about your industry — whether it's construction or anything else. Know who's who, who's achieved what, and even who's suing who. Admit when you don't know something, let go of the fear, then find out the answer. Finally never, ever be afraid people may dislike you for being smart. It's the nature of the construction business that you're sometimes going to have to make unpopular decisions. Not everyone is going to love you, but as long as they respect you, it will be fine because you'll create your own opportunities. □

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Social Media

An Effective Way For Builders to Connect With Women Home Buyers

Social Media: An Effective Way For Builders to Connect With Women Home Buyers

IBS speaker: 'They joined your Facebook page. They want to talk to you.'

Builders who scoff at social media are ignoring a powerful way to connect with women buyers of all ages.

According to top marketers, all of whom are actively involved in social media, significant numbers of women are engaging online with friends and family as well as brands and companies. Just consider these two stats:

- 72% of female Internet users said they'd learned about a new product or brand online or joined a group around a product or brand.

- 80% of female Internet users said they'd become a fan of a product or brand on Facebook.

That represents an undeniable opportunity to the housing industry. After all, some research indicates that women influence 91% of all home buying decisions, according to the speakers.

But how does a builder put that all together to sell more homes? "I hired a mommy blogger, and she got me 120 fans on Facebook," one flummoxed builder asked. "Now that I have them, what do I do with them?"

Given the laughter that broke out in the seminar room, it was clearly a question on many audience members' minds.

The quick answer? Connect with those Facebook fans by asking questions about their homes, their neighborhoods, their lives in their new homes. "They joined your Facebook page," one of the speakers responded. "They want to talk to you." The longer answer involves developing and managing a presence for your home building company online through social media. To accomplish that, here is what the speakers recommend:

1. Establish a blog with your own URL. "Your blog is the engine of your program. It is the only thing you own," Flammer



said. "Facebook can and will change its rules. Twitter can and will change its rules." If your blog is the cornerstone of your online marketing efforts, however, you will retain control over your information and how it is presented, no matter how policies and practices might change at whatever social media site

might be hot at the moment.

2. Post to your blog(s) consistently. In terms of frequency, "whatever momentum you start, keep it," advised a speaker, whether that's daily or monthly. Current conventional wisdom recommends posting about eight times each month.

3. Keep the blog authentic. Many builders—especially small ones—wonder who should or can do a blog. The speakers' answer: Whoever wants to do it, from the company president to the sales staff. To avoid worries about creating a consistent voice across a variety of writers, simply have everyone blog under their own name. What should they write about? Whatever they are passionate about, whether it's home design, quality construction, energy efficiency, seeing families become homeowners, or anything else related to housing and the places in which you build.

4. Monitor your company's online reputation—good and bad—by signing

continues on page 28



What Women Home Buyers Want

The age-old question "What do women want?" was, not surprisingly, a popular topic at the International Builders' Show in Orlando, Fla., this week, since studies show women make most of the home-buying decisions.

Naturally, the next question to arise was, once you figure out what they want, how do you reach them and sell to them?

The answers, gathered from two IBS sessions on Thursday, yielded laundry lists that were light on specific features to include in a home and heavy on ways to appeal emotionally to potential women buyers.

Tara-Nicholle Nelson, a real estate broker, attorney, book author, and real estate blogger in Tulia, Texas, declared during her session called "The Art and Science of Being Indispensable to Women Buyers" that builders need to make a home something women buyers think they can't live without—or would rather not live without.

"The American dream is still alive and well," she said, adding that sellers need to call it a "home" not a "house" and "make buyers think that their life would be perfect if they lived in that home."

While acknowledging that's a tall order that builders aren't used to filling, she offered examples of other products that have successfully become must-haves for consumers today, becoming "lovemarks," a status beyond strong branding that evokes a "strong emotional relationship" with the product and "loyalty beyond reason." As examples of products that command a high level of love as well as respect, she listed Starbucks, Apple, and Moleskine notebooks.

Homebuilders might get respect from women buyers, but it's seldom they get the love, too. To truly attract women buyers, builders need to figure out how to evoke a passionate desire to buy their homes.

"The real estate market is tired. It's the same old things," Nelson said. "We have to look outside of our market for inspiration." Three energetic women offered tips on how to reach women buyers better via the Internet and sell them at the sales center in "Sisterhood of the Traveling Laptop: What Women Want Online and Onsite."

Meredith Oliver of Meredith Communications said women use the Internet to compare prices and search for coupons. "In our industry we don't do much of that on our websites," she said. Some website suggestions include:

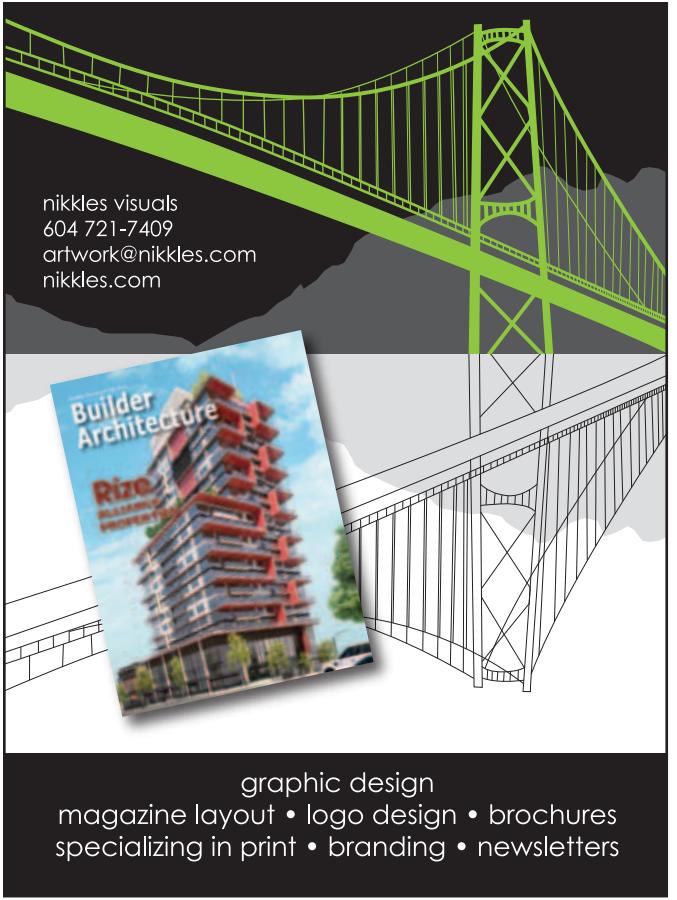
- Sell lifestyle, using photos of people enjoying their homes rather than static home shots
- Offer free giveaways
- Allow side-by-side comparisons of floor plans
- Include a shopping cart feature
- "Killer" photography and videos
- A "Like" button to create buzz on Facebook
- Easy to find and see navigation buttons
- Multiple navigation paths so there are several ways to get to places on the site
- Easy to find contact information
- Pricing
- Printable PDF files
- Links to related, pertinent information
- Information about the neighborhoods as well as the surrounding areas

Carol Flammer, managing partner of mRELEVANCE, an Atlanta-based public relations and social media company specializing in residential real estate emphasized that using social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, are necessary tools to reach women now.

She said 79% of moms use social media outlets and 43% use them every day. They trust other people like themselves as sources of information, so getting Facebook buzz going about

continues on page 28





Industry News: Homeowner Protection Office

What is Raising the Bar?

In response to industry's continued desire to enhance professionalism in the residential construction sector, the Province through the Homeowner Protection Office (HPO) established a collaborative process with the residential construction industry to develop a new system of prescribed qualifications for licensees under the Homeowner Protection Act. An industry task group (The Main Task Group) was charged with developing recommendations for a new system of qualifications for licensees which includes core competencies for different categories of licences, educational benchmarks, training programs and professional development requirements.

The Main Task Group, in October 2008, recommended creating an independent body for the purpose of assisting government with the implementation and on-going review of prescribed qualifications

The Handy Canadian (National)

To help with your energy-efficient home heating or home cooling, the Handy Canadian has some information on do-it-yourself insulating.

Natural Home Cooling (Vancouver Island)

The natural home cooling section of the eartheasy.com website has some information on insulation and venting your attic. This information is helpful for home heating as well as home cooling.

Social Media *continued from page 26*

up for Google Alerts on your company name. Not only will you find out quickly about an unhappy customer complaining online, but you may also discover fans you didn't even know you had. (When you do come across such a person, connect with them: Gundersen sent flowers to a homeowner who posted a positive comment about Monte Hewett Homes on a real estate site.)

5. Find and cultivate advocates for your brand. This could include happy homeowners, real estate agents, mommy bloggers in your markets, and more. More and more large companies are actively reaching out to mommy bloggers to build their brand among consumers.

6. Think about ways you can use social media (Twitter, Facebook, Foursquare, YouTube, Flickr, and more) to create a broad, integrated campaign that you might have done in

the past via conventional media sources. Post photos of your new homes on Flickr. Upload videos of construction and completed models on YouTube. Ask your Facebook fans about their favorite aspect of their new home.

7. Remember to brand your social media outlets just as you would any other marketing materials. Use customized backgrounds, icons, and avatars as necessary to reflect your company's image and message.

Characteristics That Attract Women To a Brand

1. Good value
2. Trustworthy
3. Responsive to moms' needs
4. High quality
5. Money-saving
6. Time-saving □

What Women Home Buyers Want *continued from page 27*

their home buying experience nets referrals. Builder websites should also include links to social media.

"Moms trust other moms," she said. That's why having a blog or links to blogs are also good things to include on websites. Other hot spots for women buyers include more organization in their homes, less clutter, more time to spend with their families, and saving money, she said.

Kerry Mulcrone, of Mulcrone & Associates, a Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn.-based company that evaluates new home sales agents, suggests that agents do a better job of just listening to women buyers because they will say what they want.

"Your value is in [providing] what they don't know," she said. Sales agents need to create a relationship with women buyers--she calls it "chemistry." They need to do a good job of demonstrating choices in homes. "You can have this refrigerator in stainless steel or black." And establishing credibility is crucial.

Sales teams also need to keep in mind that the sales process doesn't end when the potential buyer walks out the door. Mulcrone said personal hand-written notes should be written and mailed afterward not just once, but several times, to bond the buyer to you. □

Industry News: Homeowner Protection Office *continued....*

What is the HPO and what are its responsibilities?

The Homeowner Protection Act's ("Act") mandate is to help bring about improvements in the quality of residential construction and increase consumer protection for buyers of new homes.

required for licensed builders who build or sell 1-4 unit residential buildings. In addition, this organization would play a role in the delivery of services to builders as they establish their personal qualifications. As a result, the Professional Builders' Institute of British Columbia (PBIBC) was created in the fall of 2010.

Why are we raising the bar of professionalism in the residential construction sector?

Given the need to establish basic consumer protections for buyers of new homes in British Columbia, the Homeowner Protection Act regulations establishing requirements for residential builder licensing and mandatory third-party home warranty insurance for new home construction came into force in 1999.

It was always anticipated that the Province would take further steps to protect consumers and professionalize the residential construction industry through the introduction of prescribed education and training qualifications as a condition of licensing. In collaboration with industry, the Province has continually moved toward this next step.

A 2005 survey of all licensed residential builders, performed by an independent research firm, indicated that 72% of builders agree that they would like to see minimum education or training benchmarks introduced as a requirement for licensing.

steps being taken to develop a system of prescribed education, training and experience benchmarks as a condition of obtaining and maintaining a residential builder licence in British Columbia. The PBIBC was established to:

- work with the HPO to create processes in order to implement the proposed new "prescribed qualifications" for licensing
- work with the HPO to establish "benchmarks" that provide detail to the "prescribed qualifications"
- provide an accreditation service to education and training providers who wish to offer builders programs that will meet the "benchmarks"
- provide a certificate program to builders that will meet the prescribed qualifications for builder licensing
- provide and administer a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) certification that will meet the proposed requirements for builders to renew their HPO licence
- provide and administer a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) program for new applicants seeking to establish their credentials through prior experience and education

continues on page 30

R-2000 Home Construction Standard (National)

Whether you are buying, building or just curious, visit Natural Resources Canada's Office of Energy Efficiency for information on R-2000 homes.

How is the PBIBC funded?

The PBIBC received start-up funds from the HPO, a branch of BC Housing during the fiscal year 2010-2011. Subsequent funding has been agreed to until April 2012. The PBIBC was created under the understanding that it eventually would become self-funding.

How is the PBIBC different from CHBA, BCCA and other industry associations?

CHBA, BCCA and other such organizations are associations which provide industry support and services to improve business effectiveness and the knowledge of its paid members. Services for members can include: education and training, events, government relations, employee benefit plans, electronic construction bidding services, job postings, standards of practice and accreditation within its own associations. Membership can include any organization or individual with an interest in the B.C.'s construction industry, including suppliers and government entities. These associations may also have related regional and national organizations.

The PBI is an independent body established under the BC Society Act to represent the industry's interests and expertise working with the HPO in implementing prescribed qualifications of licensees. This includes the accreditation of providers of benchmark education programs that will count toward the anticipated minimum education and training requirements needed to obtain and maintain a residential builder licence in British Columbia. As an accrediting body, the PBI does not provide education and training, but it will review and accredit education and training programs, including those submitted by industry associations. The PBI collaborates on the establishment of "benchmarks" for the prescribed qualifications and the details of the Continuing Professional Development Program. The PBI also manages an application and adjudication process that leads to the issuance of a certificate to the residential builder applicant. □

Who must be licensed as a residential builder in B.C.?

A residential builder (as defined in the Homeowner Protection Act) is a person who engages in, arranges for or manages all or substantially all of the construction of a new home or agrees to do any of those things, and includes a developer and a general contractor.

What are the current requirements for residential licensing in B.C.?

Residential builders must be licensed by the Homeowner Protection Office, a branch of BC Housing, in order to obtain a building permit for new home construction or to obtain an applicable exemption. In geographic areas where building permits are not required, licensing is required prior to the commencement of new home construction.

Currently the major requirement for residential builder licensing is acceptance with a home warranty insurance provider.

How does PBIBC certification and accreditation differ from an HPO licence?

Residential builders are required under the Homeowner Protection Act and regulations to obtain a residential builder licence with the Homeowner Protection Office in order to obtain a building permit or commence construction of new homes built for sale in British Columbia.

The PBI, in collaboration with the HPO, will establish "benchmarks" for the education, training and experience needed by a new applicant to satisfy the "prescribed qualifications." Accreditation from the PBI will allow organizations offering education and training for the residential construction industry to have its courses and programs count toward requirements for minimum qualifications for licensed residential builders.

Once the anticipated requirements for minimum qualifications are set by government, certification from the PBI will provide a builder with the required written proof that they have successfully achieved the education, training and experience needed to obtain and maintain a residential builder licence in the province of British Columbia. This certification will form part of the application for a Homeowner Protection Office residential builder licence.

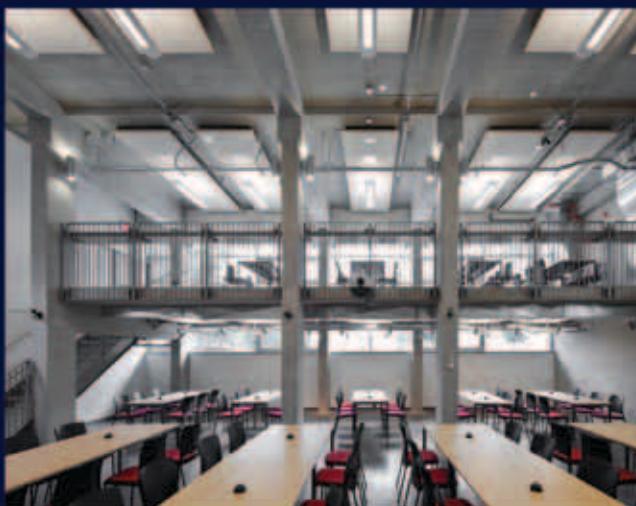
It is also proposed that, as a condition of renewing a licence, residential builders will successfully complete an annual program of Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the details of which are still to be determined in collaboration with industry. It is intended that the PBIBC will provide and administer certification for the CPD requirement. □

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Angus Painting	25
Adria Electric	24
Bc Hydro	5
Bell Pacific	6
City of Surrey	18
Derek Lepper Photography	Inside Back Cover
Enerfoam	6
Jeld – Wen Windows	Inside Front Cover
KD Engineering.....	6
Metro Blasting	22
P.A.C.K.K. Industries	22
Red Seal Electric	24
Starline Windows	6
The Steel Guys.....	24
Westeck Windows & Doors	Outside Back Cover

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