

On the south shore of False Creek, develop a neighbourhood that is the model of sustainability, incorporating forward-thinking infrastructure; strategic energy reduction; high-performance buildings; and high transit access.

With those words in 1991, the City of Vancouver challenged itself to redevelop an abandoned brownfield site adjacent to its downtown core into a vision of what Vancouver – and all cities – could become in the future. Though many involved at the time will confirm they didn't know exactly what "sustainability" meant or would look like, they understood it was a critical goal.

The willingness to set a vision and then reach for it, through community consultation, private sector collaboration, and eventually, the driving urgency of the Olympic deadline, resulted in the Millennium Water Olympic Village that stands on the shores of SEFC today. In chapters past, we have detailed the tangible steps of the development journey. Here, we include reflections and comments from those who were involved, as they consider where they have come from and where we all go from here.



The site of the future Millennium Water Olympic Village, prior to development, c. 2006.

SEFC and the Olympic Village establish a new model for Vancouverism. It's one of the most interesting mixes of sustainability, urbanism, livability and vibrancy that we've ever seen. It dispels the myth that we do one type of building in Vancouver – the tower and podium. The message that sustainability can take many forms is going to be very powerful for us as a city.

Models are only useful if they change business as usual, and the Olympic Village has already changed the status quo – how our zoning works, the way we perceive barriers to green design, the way we see passive design and urban agriculture, the way we think about urban form and density. Everything has changed.

The residents of this new community will be able to lead a matchless lifestyle for sustainability – very urban, very sustainable, very healthy, very safe and very vibrant. It's usually pretty hard to get all of those components in one place. I think the careful planning in the Olympic Village has achieved a community that is more than the sum of its parts.

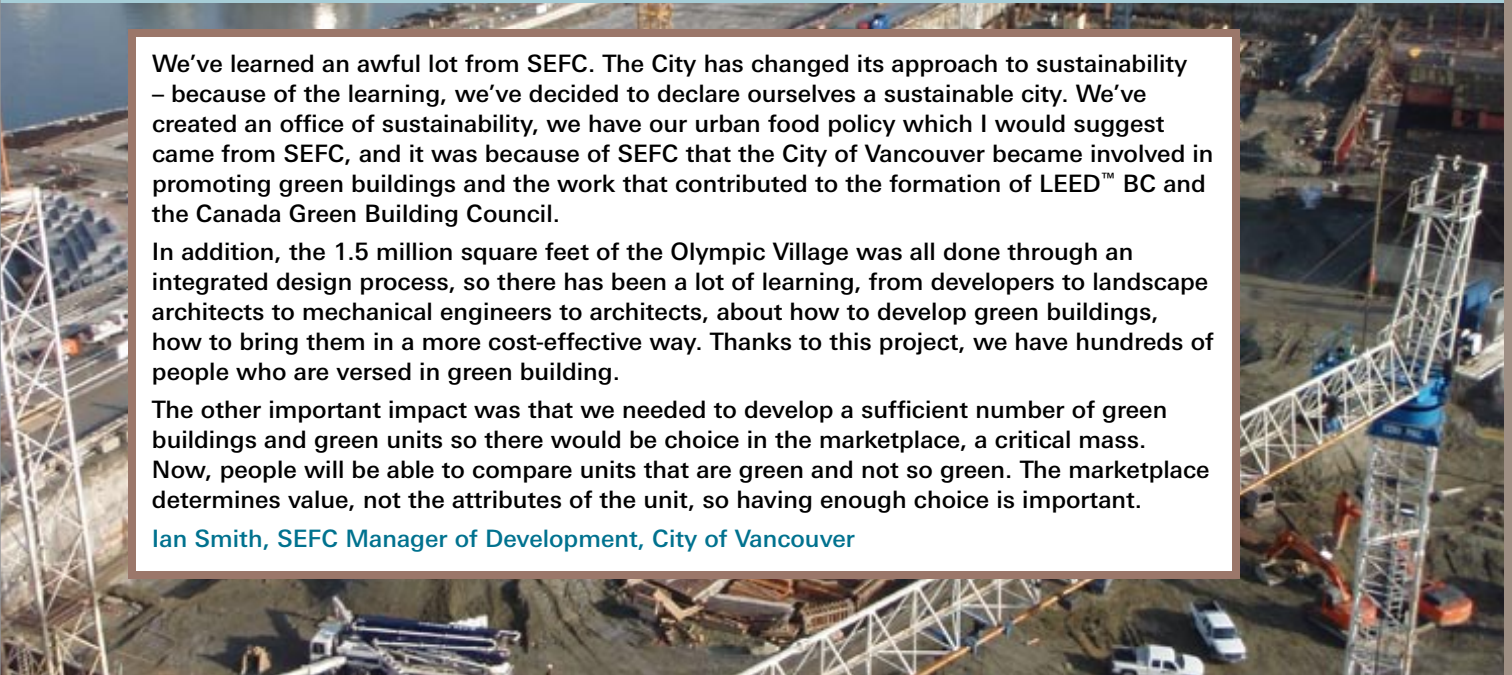
Brent Toderian, Director of Planning, City of Vancouver

We've learned an awful lot from SEFC. The City has changed its approach to sustainability – because of the learning, we've decided to declare ourselves a sustainable city. We've created an office of sustainability, we have our urban food policy which I would suggest came from SEFC, and it was because of SEFC that the City of Vancouver became involved in promoting green buildings and the work that contributed to the formation of LEED™ BC and the Canada Green Building Council.

In addition, the 1.5 million square feet of the Olympic Village was all done through an integrated design process, so there has been a lot of learning, from developers to landscape architects to mechanical engineers to architects, about how to develop green buildings, how to bring them in a more cost-effective way. Thanks to this project, we have hundreds of people who are versed in green building.

The other important impact was that we needed to develop a sufficient number of green buildings and green units so there would be choice in the marketplace, a critical mass. Now, people will be able to compare units that are green and not so green. The marketplace determines value, not the attributes of the unit, so having enough choice is important.

Ian Smith, SEFC Manager of Development, City of Vancouver



PROFILE

City of Vancouver Sustainability Group

The Sustainability Group focuses on climate protection, green building and bringing sustainability to all aspects of running and building the city. The idea for building a Net Zero demonstration project at SEFC emerged from the Sustainability Group.

The City of Vancouver is a North American leader in green building policy. "We've always taken our Kyoto commitment seriously," says David Ramslie, the City's Sustainable Development Program Manager. "The City has set a goal for new construction to be carbon neutral by 2030."

In order to meet this ambitious target, the Sustainability Group's multidisciplinary team takes an integrated approach, advocating for a low-carbon lifestyle. This encompasses a sustainable approach to transit, building codes, infrastructure, zoning and development, design guidelines, and public engagement in conservation efforts.

At SEFC, the Sustainability Group's dedication to the Net Zero target meant that the goal could be realized. "The City allowed energy to be transferred between properties – this is a big deal, says Goran Ostojic of Cobalt Engineering, giving credit to the Sustainability Group's leadership. "The concept of crossing boundaries should be transferred to future developments if we are to make progress with carbon neutral building."