

Simi Valley officials dedicate city's first LEED-certified facility

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- Posted February 29, 2012 at 4:52 p.m., updated February 29, 2012 at 7:32 p.m.

When Simi Valley's transit maintenance facility received federal grant funding, workers were pleased the facility built in 1985 finally was going to be upgraded.

The building not only was modernized but also ended up meeting such stringent environmental and energy design requirements that it received a Gold Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, or LEED, certification.

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The certification from the U.S. Green Building Council makes it the first LEED-certified project in the city and the first LEED Gold-certified municipal project in Ventura County.

The renovated building was unveiled at a dedication Wednesday attended by city and county officials.

"We're very excited that this is the city's first LEED project and we received Gold status. Very few projects have achieved Gold," said Debbie Solomon, director of the city's Department of Community Services.

The \$2.4 million project was funded with Federal Transit and American Reinvestment and Recovery Act funds.

Kennard Design Group had worked with the city since 2009 to develop the building, completed last year.

The existing 2,811-square-foot structure was expanded 1,100 square feet. The design team salvaged more than 95 percent of the building's structural system and 56 percent of its nonstructural components. About 97 percent of the construction waste could be recycled.

Native and drought-tolerant plants are reducing landscape water use by more than 57 percent, and additional new low-flush toilets, valves and fixture aerators have contributed to a 40 percent reduction in water use.

The facility also was modernized, and safety upgrades were made to the garage for maintaining the city's compressed natural gas bus fleet.

Chuck Perkins, deputy director of transit for the Department of Community Services, said new monitors are constantly checking the air and gas levels in the building and will warn workers if they're at dangerous levels.

Upgrades to the gas dispensing area will allow for expanded use of compressed natural gas vehicles in east Ventura County, including in neighboring Moorpark, which has a cooperative transit agreement with Simi Valley.

A \$260,000 bus wash has been added that uses a reverse osmosis system that is quick-drying and uses less water and soap, Perkins said.

Michelle Zimney, president-elect of the local U.S. Green Building Council chapter, said recycled, renewable and regional materials also were used to make the building healthier and more efficient for workers and visitors.

Simi Valley Councilman Glen Becerra said many people are surprised to hear how aggressive the city has become with "green" technologies and sustainable strategies.

"We've found if we approach it with a cost-benefit analysis, it's good for business and everyone wins," Becerra said.

Simi Valley Mayor Bob Huber said he was pleased the project won a major award, though similar future projects would depend on whether the city obtains more grant money.

"We have to be aggressive with getting the grants, especially because redevelopment funds have been taken away from us," Huber said. "The more we can make our city Earth-friendly, the better, as far as I'm concerned."

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SBS LEED Gold Certified Project included a facility expansion and garage modification.