



Seeing the World Through Green-Colored Glasses

As the word “green” slowly stopped referring merely to a color, GH Phipps began taking steps to make its construction processes as sustainable as possible, conserving energy and resources, and developing better ways to recycle and reuse building materials so they don’t turn into just more waste in a landfill.

The process took off in 2003, when Boulder Community Hospitals’ Foothills Campus was certified LEED Silver by the U.S. Green Building Council – the first hospital in the country to be accredited under the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design program. In all, the firm has constructed 19 buildings certified as meeting or on track to meet LEED standards. Several others, including the recently opened Anderson Academic Commons at the University of Denver, have been designed and built to LEED certification levels, but the owners have elected not to pursue the certification process.

Now, GH Phipps has two high-profile sustainable projects taking their final forms, buildings that aim high in their goal of saving resources, tempering life-cycle costs, and improving the environment – inside and out. The Denver Museum of Nature & Science (DMNS) Education and Collections Facility is aiming for LEED Platinum certification, while the Community College of Denver (CCD) Confluence Building – with a ribbon cutting set for May 2 – is on track to be certified LEED Gold.

■ **Community College of Denver Confluence Building.** The Confluence Building started out



Mary Chandler

Business Development and Communications Specialist, GH Phipps Construction Companies, Greenwood Village

as the Student Learning and Engagement Building, but last year gained a new name that reflects the geographic area and helps differentiate the CCD campus. Officials and students decided to gather structures in the school’s “neighborhood” under an umbrella of names that refer to the creeks that once served the Auraria neighborhood. On May 2, the school will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony that marks the beginning of the building’s life; over that weekend, furniture will be moved in for offices, as administrators prepare for students’ use later that month.

The 85,000-square-foot, four-story Confluence Building is designed to serve students with resource centers for admissions, financial aid and registration; a

testing center; classrooms, and other programs that offer one-stop support.

Designed by OZ Architecture and Boora Architects, the \$28 million Confluence Building also will feature sophisticated design and construction strategies to reduce energy and increase comfort. These include a super-insulated building envelope that incorporates spray foam insulation, chilled beams, displacement ventilation, and daylighting controls. A green roof covered with grasses and pea gravel will help moderate building temperatures and address storm-water runoff (though the area on top of the second floor will not be open for use).

Consecutive renovations also are occurring in CCD’s current facility, the South Classroom building.

■ **Denver Museum of Nature & Science Education and Collections Facility.** In 2012, this nationally respected cultural and scientific facility attracted more than 1.4 million visitors. For years, though, it has been storing its collections totaling just as many artifacts and specimens anywhere it could find space. That means anywhere. That situation is coming to an end, as the five-story, 126,000-square-foot Education and Collections Facility will provide two levels of environmentally controlled collections storage below grade, and three floors of space above grade to house educational programs and exhibitions. These include the second-floor Discovery Zone, an interactive space for young visitors, designed by Jeff Kennedy Associates, Inc. The spaces are built around an atrium at the

center of the facility on the south side of the museum.

This \$43 million project, funded by Better Denver Bonds and private contributions, has been a long-time dream of DMNS, allowing it to centralize storage and provide optimum conditions for its holdings. Designed by Klipp Architecture and constructed by GH Phipps, the project is targeted for completion this fall, with an opening in spring 2014. For months, the facility was an immense hole in the ground; at completion, more than 59,000 cubic yards of dirt will have been removed, and about 13,580 cubic yards of concrete poured. In practical terms, the soil hauled out filled 3,697 truckloads, while the cubic yards of concrete required deliveries made by 1,358 trucks.

What supports a Platinum certification? The museum’s heating and cooling system will rely on geothermal energy, fueled by heat pumps and recycled water from a Denver Water “purple pipe” system located near the Denver Zoo. Also, the project utilizes low-VOC materials and finishes, light-sensitive glazing, and certified wood. The facility will undergo a burn-out process to clean out the interior and prepare it for occupancy.

This is the latest in a string of projects GH Phipps has worked on at the museum over the past three decades, including an upgrade of the fire suppression system, and construction of the Leprino Family Atrium, the Expedition Health installation, and a loading dock expansion that centralizes that operation.