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Green by Design: Corus Quay

When it comes to real estate decisions, environmental consciousness has crept into the professional realm and inched its way up the management checklist. Today, more and more businesses are evaluating the costs of housing their company in a green building. In the past five years, out of a total 280 projects, the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) has seen 73 registered Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) office projects come to market. This number will continue to grow as office buildings contribute 35% of Canada's Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and consume 14% of Canada's total secondary energy, such as electricity and natural gas.

While a significant proportion of green buildings in the GTA are owned by private companies, legislation for public buildings is also gaining momentum in support of building green. In 2003, the City of Calgary became the first Canadian municipality to adopt a sustainable building policy that requires all new City buildings and major renovations to existing ones meet or exceed LEED Silver Certification. A similar policy is mirrored in both Vancouver and Ottawa. The City of Toronto has two green build mandates which include its [Toronto Green Standard](#) and [Green Roof Bylaw](#).

So, what makes green buildings so attractive? Green buildings offer a myriad of benefits to both owners and tenants. By using resources like energy, water, materials and land more efficiently, green buildings boast lower operating costs than their brown counterparts. With more natural light and better air quality, green buildings also offer intangible benefits such as a healthier work environment for employees resulting in reduced employee absenteeism and increased productivity. Additionally, green buildings improve public perceptions of the building and suggest a progressive company image as being modern, dynamic and more humane. Finally, from an owner's perspective, building green can lead to a higher building asset value, greater net operating income and return on investment.

One of Toronto's newest green office projects is [Corus Entertainment's](#) Toronto headquarters, Corus Quay, located on the city's waterfront. In 2006 DTZ Barnicke, international commercial brokerage firm was retained by Corus as its consultants to find a new home for the company. The challenge presented to DTZ Barnicke was to consolidate Corus' multiple offices into one space. Though the goal was to improve its operating synergies through this consolidation, Corus also sought a space close to the city centre in order to remain attractive as a work destination to its high caliber employees.

DTZ Barnicke worked with Corus to find the most suitable location and solution for its new work environment. After examining several alternatives to lease space in an existing building, the idea was floated to participate in a design build opportunity. The

site that best met Corus' needs was a piece of land owned by The City of Toronto Economic Development Corporation (TEDCO), now known as Toronto Port Lands Company (TPLC), an organization that focuses on commercial, industrial and mixed use projects. Acting as both consultant and broker, DTZ Barnicke negotiated the complex lease agreement to achieve the objectives of both TPLC as landlord and Corus Entertainment as its tenant. DTZ Barnicke also worked with [Quadrangle Architects Limited](#) to clarify and negotiate the interior construction details and budgets and [Diamond and Schmitt Architects Inc.](#) for matters relating to the base building budgets.

The result of the design-build option executed under the guidance of DTZ Barnicke agents, Jim Higgs, Ted Bloom and Tom McCarthy, is the new sustainable Corus Quay building. It occupies 2.5 acres at the edge of Lake Ontario next to Redpath Sugar in an area known as East Bayfront. The \$150 million site, earmarked to be transferred to new development company, Build Toronto, represents 500,000 sq ft. of office and broadcast space that will enable Corus to compete in the ever evolving digital marketplace. Corus Entertainment, whose President and CEO is John Cassaday, is one of Canada's most successful integrated media and entertainment companies, will take occupancy in spring 2010.

Several of the green design elements incorporated in this project were spawned by an employee green team initiative. The company's new building was planned and constructed with employee well-being and comfort in mind and hopes to achieve a LEED Gold Certification. Notable green aspects include a collaborative, modular, open concept work environment giving people plenty of access to daylight and a balance of private and public space. There are also CO₂ sensors and numerous thermostats strategically located around the office to provide optimal thermal comfort. Likewise, an individual lighting control system by [Fifth Light Technology](#) is being used to balance the need for electricity with the pursuit of energy sustainability, as well as a five-storey high bio-filter (green living) wall designed to improve the standard of indoor air quality. Lastly, bicycle storage with change rooms and showers to encourage employees to ride to work and a shuttle that takes employees to and from public transportation will be available until a streetcar line connecting the area to downtown Toronto is in place.

New developments like Corus Quay are raising the bar for landlords, tenants and green buildings alike. Whether the impetus is to raise employee satisfaction, increase a building's return on investment or align corporate mission statements with work environments, the advantages of green buildings are convincing and will continue to encourage decision makers in the business community to consider green alternatives when it comes to real estate.

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