

Edmonds Sustainability Heroes

Edmonds PCC



(On January 3, 2014, Hank Landau and Cynthia Pruitt, members of the Mayor's Climate Protection Committee of Edmonds met with Diana Chapman of PCC Natural Markets (PCC) to learn about PCC's efforts towards sustainability at their Edmonds location. The following article was compiled from the conversation with Ms. Chapman as well as information provided on PCC's website.)

Diana started out by explaining that PCC has nine Stores in the Puget Sound Region. In addition, two new stores are planned; one for Greenlake Village this year and Columbia City next year. The Edmonds PCC opened in 2008 and is PCC's largest store at 25,000 square feet. It is the first grocery store in the country to be certified both LEED Platinum and Salmon Safe. (The Redmond PCC store was the first grocery store in the nation to be certified LEED Gold.)¹

PCC started making improvements slowly to increase its stores' sustainability (for example, they started by remodeling one classroom using recycled materials and then began incorporating energy and water saving features into stores built and remodeled). In remodeling the older Albertson's grocery store building in Edmonds, PCC recycled 97 percent (106 tons) of the

¹ LEED is a voluntary rating system developed by the Green Building Council. Salmon Safe is a certification for practices that protect water quality and habitat for salmon.

removed building materials. In addition, the building had more square footage than PCC needed. That extra space is now used as a commissary to prepare uniform quality deli food for all nine stores.

Energy Conservation and Environmental practices at Edmonds PCC have included:

- The space and hot water heating as well as refrigeration systems are all interconnected using the same refrigeration loop so waste heat from the refrigeration systems is used by the other functions.
- The white reflective thermo plastic poly olefin roof (TPO) reflects sunlight and reduces costs and energy requirements for cooling compared to conventional roofs.
- The store's rooftop rainwater harvesting system captures 160,000 gallons of rainwater per year for use both in the rain gardens (in the parking areas) and for flushing toilets. The rainwater is cleaned via an impressive array of pumps and filters. (During the remodeling they managed to save thousands of dollars by purchasing a used cistern for \$500 – a recycled product from another site in Puget Sound.)
- An electric vehicle charging station was installed in the parking lot ahead of its time.
- Low energy lighting is used throughout the store.
- At two Eastside PCC stores, food scraps are being repurposed onsite to produce liquid fertilizer using a process developed by the WISerg Corporation, a local start-up. This greatly reduces the amount of food waste hauled away and provides a product which is sold in the stores. It also provides a way to measure "shrinkage" (products which could not be sold).
- There are 35 skylights with special glazing that allows 65 percent of the visible light to enter while blocking 64 percent of the sun's heat. This approach is energy efficient and, in addition, it makes the organic products look more natural and inviting.
- The store uses nightshades to keep cool air contained in the product display cases after closing.
- The deli switched from round to square bowls (for salads, meats, etc.) to maximize space and cooling efficiency in their display cases.
- They use LED lights in the food cases to save energy.
- Because PCC is a Certified Organic Retailer and must maintain the Washington State Department of Agriculture's rigorous standards for handling organic products, they follow particular procedures, such as cleaning the floors using a soapless floor scrubber that uses "excited water."
- Recycled materials are used throughout the store.

Diana explained that it has been particularly satisfying that the Edmonds store has done so well. The community has welcomed PCC; residents, the media, and other businesses have expressed a great deal of interest in the store and its sustainability-related initiatives.

Diana went on to explain that the store's sustainable practices are consistent with PCC's culture. Plus, these practices save energy and money. And they have fostered an element of pride in the employees which contributes to low turnover and less costs for hiring new employees and training. They have found a huge benefit in their customer relations. Their shoppers appreciate that PCC tries to make the environment in which they shop as healthy as the products they are buying.

Finally, Diana assured us that, yes, PCC will continue to pursue these kinds of initiatives in the future. Her recommendation to others who are considering energy and sustainability improvements is to go slow and deliberately. More information can be found on their website: www.pccnaturalmarkets.com