

## SUMMARY: Edmonds (WA) School District

**T**he Edmonds School District includes several small cities and some unincorporated areas in Snohomish County, located on Puget Sound just north of Seattle and King County in Washington state. The district enrolls over 20,000 students in 34 school facilities. See <http://www.edmonds.wednet.edu/business/Citizen%27s%20Guide/default.htm>. Over the past several years, during the course of two major school building programs, Edmonds School District has put in place an innovative planning, design and construction process that emphasizes extensive community participation. Through this process the community has provided considerable support for incorporating health and environmental strategies into the building program. As a result, the district has established an approach to building schools that includes an array of high performance design features.

### BACKGROUND

#### Building Program

In 1994, the district passed a \$118 million bond issue after three failed attempts over the preceding few years. The revenues were used to build two new high schools, among other projects. Another local bond issue of over \$75 million passed in 1998, and the subsequent building program included construction of two K-6 schools and three K-8 schools. All of these projects were replacements for buildings constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. Over the course of the two bond programs, the district incorporated numerous high performance design and construction practices in a process that included considerable community involvement. In 2004, a capital levy provided for technology improvements and the schematic design for two high school building projects. A bond issue is planned for early 2006, which would include construction of the two high schools, as well as other building projects. See <http://www.edmonds.wednet.edu/cpo/>.

#### School District Support for High Performance Schools

The Edmonds School District's focus on high performance design has been driven not by formal written policy, but rather by the efforts and experience of the district's Capital Projects Office staff, the design teams hired for individual projects, and the community teams assembled to guide the projects. As noted below, community support has been an important component of the initiative. Nevertheless, the extent to which community support translated into high performance school design has depended heavily on the district project managers and the design firms hired by the district. The inclusion of high performance features in several projects reflected the considerable experience and interest of district officials, as well as their design teams and sustainability consultant. School officials also note that during the initial development of the community design process, the district's superintendent actively supported the exploration of a variety of innovative approaches to facility planning, and this support facilitated the subsequent pursuit of high performance building strategies.

#### Outside Support for High Performance Schools

**Community Support.** The Edmonds School District's high performance school building initiative is notable for its community-led planning process. A community design committee, consisting of a broad range of stakeholders, is created at the very early stages of planning for a group of building projects. Through meetings and workshops, the committee spends a considerable amount of time developing a set of general goals to guide the building projects and then monitoring the design process to ensure consistency with the goals. The district's capital projects staff facilitate this process by raising certain key issues for consideration, while ensuring that the committee has the opportunity to pursue new ideas. As a result of the community design process, sustainability became part of the district's design goals for the projects completed in the 1994 and 1998 building programs, and is expected to continue as a focus in the district's current building activities.

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**State Support.** As described in the summary of Spokane Public Schools, the state of Washington has taken a variety of significant steps to promote high performance building. Although these state measures may influence how the Edmonds school district incorporates health and environmental goals in the future, the district's sustainable building activities gained momentum with the 1994 and 1998 building programs, prior to the state's initiative.

**PROGRAM COMPONENTS****Program Planning**

As described above, community involvement is a central component of the district's formal planning process for capital projects. According to district officials, the aim of the community-led design committees has been to create facilities that support student learning and future learning trends. During the 1994 and 1998 building programs, the community design committees incorporated environmental and health goals into their educational vision and established sustainability as part of the district's design goals. Building on this general goal of sustainability, district project managers worked closely with A/E firms to incorporate a range of high performance strategies into their building projects. The 1998 building projects in particular reflect this emphasis.

**Technical Assistance**

The district hired a consulting firm with extensive sustainable design experience to assist in the process of incorporating high performance strategies into the 1998 building projects. The consultants played a critical role early in the design process by leading "eco-charrettes," in which a district project manager and the design team worked together to identify health and environmental strategies that could be incorporated.

**Framework for High Performance Design**

**Application of High Performance Design Strategies.** The result of the community planning process and design charrettes was the identification and inclusion of a number of sustainable design elements in the five new primary schools built as part of the 1998 bond program. While the school designs differ, they generally incorporate the following strategies: daylighting; energy efficiency; materials efficiency/conservation; indoor air quality (*e.g.*, low-emitting materials); commissioning; using the building as a teaching tool; and community/joint use. *See* Edmonds School Districts, Capital Projects, at: <http://www.edmonds.wednet.edu/cpo/>.

Although the district has not formalized its sustainable design strategies in a written guidance document, school officials note that future projects will involve a similar process for considering how best to incorporate these design features into individual projects. The district already has conducted two integrated design charrettes early in the preliminary design of one of its two current replacement high school projects. An area sustainable design and construction organization provided a professional facilitator for the charrettes, which included participation by all disciplines from the design team; district education, maintenance, custodial and capital projects staff; and representatives of the local Public Utility District. According to district officials, the resulting recommendations have been included in the formal programming document (educational specifications) for the project.