

2015 WOOD DESIGN AWARDS - WINNER

Interior Beauty Design

Gregg Brown, KMBR Architects Planners, working in association with Nick Bevanda, CEI Architecture

Southern Okanagan Secondary School Expansion (SOSS), Oliver, BC



*“Comfortable and warm.
Playful and fun. Wonderful
exterior details. This project
feels good about the wood.”*

- jury comments

High resolution images
available. Please e-mail
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The Southern Okanagan Secondary School (SOSS) renovation and expansion was completed by KMBR Architects Planners in collaboration with CEI Architecture. The project began as an expansion and renovation to the existing SOSS, which included the Venables Theatre, an attached, 700-seat, community-supported performing arts theatre, constructed as part of the original school. This important community building, originally constructed in 1949, was designed in the Art Deco, “Moderne” style popular in that period. In recognition of its historical significance, it was decided that the project would include the renovation of the two-storey classroom block and the gymnasium.

The design of this LEED Gold project is appropriate to the desert climate in which it is located. There are references back to the Art Deco Moderne style, but the design is modern and bright, and maximizes the use of wood, as a reference to the Province of BC’s Wood First policy. The multi-purpose room is the primary focal point for student gathering and is designed as an expressive wood structure constructed from glued-laminated beams, wood decking, and concrete and wood columns. This space is circular in plan and opens to a central courtyard. This stunning structure is repeated for the Venables Theatre lobby. The new Performing Arts Theatre was completed in February 2014. This new wing provides seating for 400 patrons in a tiered seating configuration. The main theatre lobby is constructed similarly to the multi-purpose room and has a unique wood roof structure. The two-storey lobby is visible from the street and allows for public gathering.

Wood is expressed throughout the building as both primary and secondary structure. The design strategy was to not cover building materials with other building materials; but rather to strive to incorporate materials that provided a dual purpose, structure and finish. Wood is ideal: a finish material that is affordable, workable and warm. The wood structure was produced in local factories, within 40 km of the site. The local trades have experience with wood and can easily

construct complicated structures where wood is the primary building material. The warmth of the material is appealing to its users, they feel it is warm and attractive. Wood is durable and can stand up to impact or vandalism. Wood was used as the primary structural roof system, exposed at the main entry, library, multi-purpose room, science lab, gymnasium and theatre. Engineered glued-laminated wood columns, beams and decking represent the exposed structure. Birch plywood panels and trim are incorporated as wall cladding throughout.

The concern of the architects was to incorporate materials appropriate for the desert climate. Wood was used and expressed in protective conditions such as interior space and for soffits on the exterior. For the interior, wood is used as follows: 1. Wall Cladding: Schools require a robust finish in public spaces, including corridors, multi-purpose spaces, gymnasiums and libraries. Wood is durable and can accommodate the needs of the students, staff and the School District, while expressing warmth as an appealing natural finish. For exposed walls, birch plywood is used. For the theatre and other areas, the birch panels are adapted to include acoustic systems to help with sound attenuation. For the gymnasium, birch plywood is used to clad the walls as a protective surface that can accommodate impact from various sport activities. For the library, wood provides a beautiful appealing surface that enhances the interior space. 2. Exposed structure: The architects expressed the decorative wood structure in the multi-purpose room, Venables Theatre and library as a focal point. For the circular rotunda frames in the multi-purpose room and Venables Theatre, the wood structure is radial, expressing a weave pattern constructed from the engineered glued-laminated wood beams. Fir decking of 2 x 6s spans between beams and acts as the interior finish. Structural columns are a combination of wood and concrete. They extend up to the ceiling, supporting a structural ring also constructed from engineered glued-laminated wood beams. Secondary curved wood brackets extend from the columns enhancing the wood pattern.