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News from MTI

Hello Mass Timber Colleagues!

Feature: TRCA Administrative Office

As part of Doors Open Toronto, Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA) invited the public to visit its newly built administrative office over the May 24th-25th weekend. The building is a joint project led by ZAS Architects and Bucholz McEvoy Architects. The building was a new addition to the offerings for Doors Open, an annual event that allows visitors to access participating buildings that may otherwise be closed to the public. At TRCA's new administrative office, guided tours highlighting the sustainability features of the new building were part of the programming. The tours demonstrate how organizations may advocate for sustainable development as clients of construction projects. MTI Editor Sanjana Patel spoke to Tisha Tan, TRCA Community Outreach and Education Program Manager, on her experiences at Doors Open.



Exterior. Local duck greets visitors at TRCA's new office building. Image Credit: Sanjana Patel, Mass Timber Institute

Sanjana Patel (MTI): What is the purpose of hosting building tours of the TRCA Head Office? What is your role?

Tisha Tan: For context, TRCA opened this head office at the end of April and we wanted this building to set a benchmark for sustainability, while also serving as the new headquarters. As for the building tours, their purpose is to offer a case study, whether it is for a developer or another organization.

My role is to coordinate community outreach. I was brought on to organize the outreach at events such as doors open and deliver tours, among other activities.

SP: What other sorts of community outreach do you do apart from building tours?

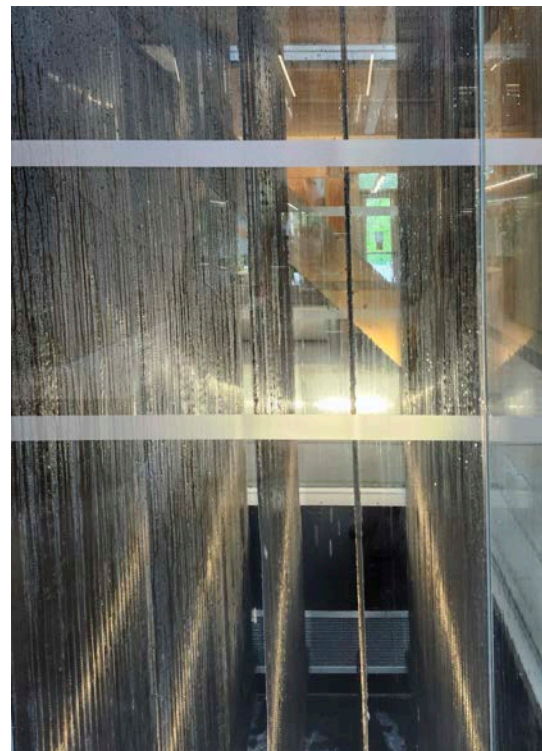
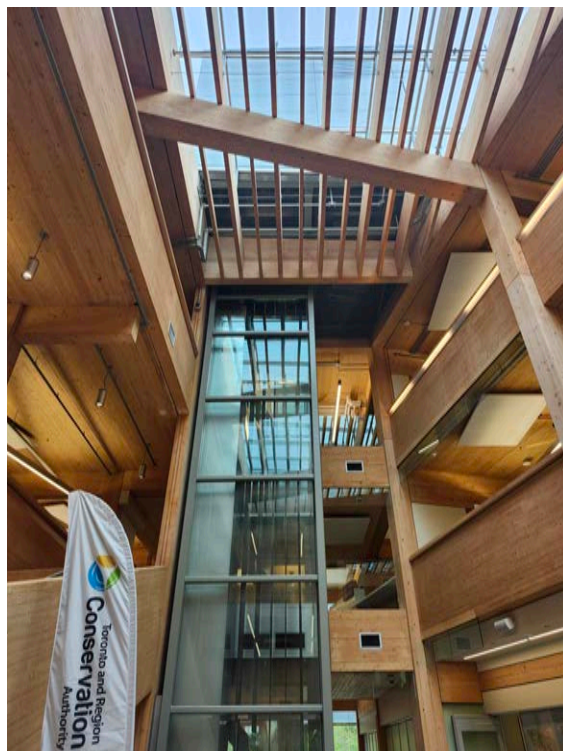
TT: My team is active in Toronto. We develop events with the goal of educating and inspiring public to sustainable action.

At Doors Open, we also had activities for kids assuming families may come. This included outdoor games on the back deck and a sample of animal furs and skulls. We

also had passive signage to aid a self guided tour of the building.

SP: What were some of the sustainability considerations discussed in the building tour?

TT: We wanted to draw attention to visible elements such as the mass timber structure, the water walls, and the BAS system which maintains energy efficiency. We also wanted to offer as many tours as possible, so we kept the Doors Open tours to a 30 min. time limit. Outside of doors open, we offer longer tours that cover more features. For example, the stormwater management features on the roof and surrounding landscape may be included in the longer tours.



Left: Water walls humidify and cool the air supplied by the building's mechanical system. Right: Close up of water wall. Water trickles down mesh screens. Image Credits: Sanjana Patel, Mass Timber Institute

SP: What type of mass timber elements are used in the building?

TT: Mass timber structural elements such as CLT and glulam were important to the “wood first” design approach. The only structural concrete in the building is at ground level, and above that, the structure is all mass timber. This includes the elevator and

stair cores. On the interior, the mass timber structure is spruce sourced from northern Europe. The exterior wood cladding is cedar sourced from Manitoulin.

SP: You mentioned the tours were brief to reach a larger audience. How many visitors did the building receive on Doors Open weekend?

TT: We received over 1400 people on Doors Open weekend. It was very exciting because this was our first experience of Doors Open at the TRCA office. We typically have other sites like the Village at Black Creek open, but this was the first time we've had an administrative building open for this event.

SP: What sort of audiences did the Doors Open tours reach?

TT: There was a range of visitors. We had families who visited the Village at Black Creek and were close by to the site, people who know TRCA, as well as architecture buffs. There was a mix of construction industry professionals and public.

SP: When the audience is so general, how do you adjust the tour?

TT: Our goal was to make the tours as consistent as possible. Our team is good at translating technical information to make it accessible for the public. To address that industry professional audience, we informed them that we also host longer tours. These longer tours are adjusted based on the organization touring and what their goals are. For instance, some are TRCA partners, while other organizations are design firms, so we curate the tours according to what the visitors are hoping to learn.

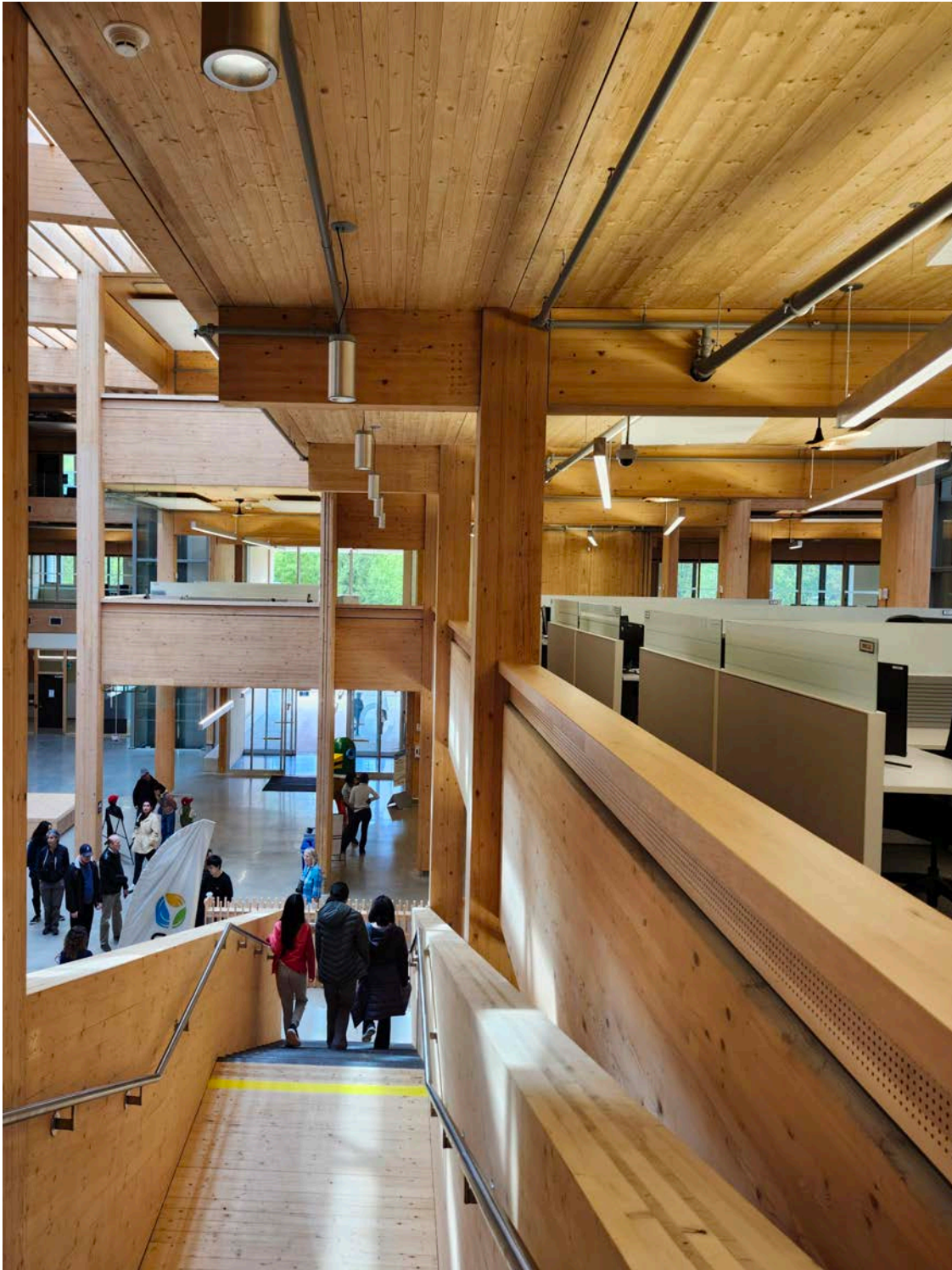
SP: What were some of the questions you received from members of the public on the tour?

TT: There were a lot of questions about the flammability. It's understandable because historically, light frame wood construction was prone to fires. However, mass timber is not flammable in the same way. There was even a question about whether cigarettes were not allowed on the property due to the fire risk. Coincidentally, there is a no smoking policy due to our WELL building certification.

SP: What does maintaining the WELL certification entail? Does the TRCA have to regularly send reports?

TT: Yes, I believe it has ongoing monitoring of the building's operation. During the construction of the building, we also had a sustainability advisor, Green Reason, on

board to advise on this aspect.



Interior. Visitors gather for a tour at the base of the stairs. Image Credit: Sanjana Patel, Mass Timber Institute

SP: I understand the TRCA also hosts building tours outside of Doors Open. How might these building tours evolve based on the experiences to date? Has the demand changed over time?

TT: As I mentioned, we vary the building tours by audience, whether it is for industry professionals, conservation organizations, or program partners for TRCA. My hope for the future is to provide curriculum connections and education. Post-secondary outreach is certainly an aspect, but it would be nice to reach younger audiences as well. After all, sustainable technology is part of the Ontario school curriculum. We're not there yet, but maybe in the future. It is still an office building.

SP: What is your favourite aspect of your role?

TT: I find the subject matter is incredibly fascinating. I went to school for environmental science but architecture and building science was not a part of it. However, I enjoyed studying for the building tours and learning something that I don't have prior experience in. Sometimes, while I'm delivering a building tour, people really versed in mass timber will remark on how exciting it is and I will think, well yes, it is!

SP: It's nice to hear their excitement motivates you as well.

TT: I always feed off energy – that's why I do what I do in outreach.

TRCA Building Project Team:

Bucholz McEvoy Architect - Project Architect

ZAS Architect – Design Architect

RJC Engineer – Structural Engineer and Building Envelope Consultant

Introba- Mechanical Engineer

Mulvey and Banani - Electrical Engineer

Eastern Construction – General Contractor

Element5 – CLT and Glulam supplier

Other Updates

- A report by Allied Market Research anticipates the global mass timber construction market will grow to 1.5 billion by 2031. [Read the details here.](#)



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