



**FCM Sustainable Community Awards  
2010 Winner — Waste  
Regional Municipality of York, Ontario  
Population: 1,011,360**



**McCleary Court Community  
Environmental Centre**



Partnerships with community agencies were key to the project's success.  
Photo credit: Regional Municipality of York

**Summary**

The McCleary Court Community Environmental Centre (CEC) — the first in a network of CECs planned for York Region — offers a one-stop waste management service that is convenient, accessible, and easy to use. The CEC supplements existing collection programs by offering a diversion service for materials not easily accommodated in curbside collection programs. The innovative layout of the CEC uses the "3Rs" (reduce, reuse, recycle) hierarchy to encourage residents to leave their materials for reuse or recycling before they reach the disposal point.

The CEC has been awarded Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Gold certification. The facility is expected to divert about 3,000 tonnes of additional residential waste from disposal annually, contributing to the region's goal of 65 per cent waste diversion by the end of 2012.

**Background**

York's planned network of CECs is a key element of the region's solid waste management infrastructure. It is one of seven priority initiatives in the Joint Waste Diversion Strategy developed by the region's Inter-Municipal Waste Diversion Committee, a collaborative group of York Region and its nine local municipalities.

York diverted about 34 per cent of residential waste from disposal in 2005. The new CECs will help the region reach its goal of 65 per cent waste diversion by the end of 2012. The region's long-term goal is to increase waste diversion to more than 70 per cent over 10 years.

The first CEC, McCleary Court, was located in the City of Vaughan to address a service gap in the region's southern area. Before construction of the CEC, the only full-service waste management depot was located in the north end, and residents in the south had to drive long distances to use it. The new facility makes participation in the region's waste diversion programs more convenient for those residents.

**Project Development**

To ensure local support for the facility, York applied "good neighbour" principles from the start. Consultations were organized to ensure that residents obtained clear and accurate information on this new type of facility. In December 2007, approximately 100 Vaughan residents attended a public consultation meeting to learn about the facility and to ask questions before the start of

construction. A few resident groups expressed concerns about issues such as increased traffic flow in the area. The region held follow-up meetings to resolve the concerns and, using the public input, adopted a variety of design and operational measures to mitigate possible problems.

In designing the facility, the region looked at other CECs across the province and adapted their most desirable features to reach a unique, made-at-home solution. The McCleary Court CEC is the first facility in the York Region to be modeled on the “3Rs” hierarchy. It is designed to be aesthetically pleasing and to blend well into the surrounding environment. It is also one of the first CECs to dispense with the requirement for residents to weigh their incoming materials, thus emphasizing the region’s focus on user convenience.

## **Project Implementation**

York Region chose the site for its first CEC with help from the city of Vaughan. The region also collaborated closely with the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority in resolving issues related to the adjacent flood plain and to preservation of an on-site woodlot.

The region worked hard to ensure that residents would find the McCleary Court CEC convenient and simple to use. Like other municipal services, the CEC runs on a five-day work week, but those five days include Saturdays and Sundays. The CEC is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. This schedule makes the facility more available to more residents in the area.

The facility’s physical design encourages users to participate in reuse and recycling activities. A conservation-themed community education space displays information on waste management programs, conservation programs, and environmental sustainability. Efficient traffic flow is promoted by having the fewest possible stopping points: traffic flows one way through four zones, and users have to stop only at the stations they need to use. This arrangement helps to educate users on the “3Rs” hierarchy and the need to separate materials. Adequate turning space for larger vehicles is provided so that small businesses can also use the waste diversion services.

The first stop is a drop-off area for reuse materials collected by Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity. Users then proceed to an area where they can drop off recyclables, including Blue Box recyclables and materials such as shredded paper, electronic equipment, energy-efficient light bulbs, and small batteries. The third zone is the “bulky recyclables” zone, which collects materials such as appliances and construction waste including wood, concrete, and drywall. Finally, users arrive at the “residual waste zone” where they can dispose of waste that cannot be reused or recycled.

The facility charges a nominal fee for residual waste, making it financially beneficial to drop off as much material as possible for reuse and recycling. The overall effect is to encourage users to make use of all the other options before they dispose of residual waste. The free reuse and recycling services are offset by the charge for residual waste. To reduce shipping costs, recyclable materials are sold to local end markets.

Early in the development of the CEC, York partnered with Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity, who both collect reusable materials from the CEC. Goodwill receives reusable household goods and sends them to its retail outlets to generate jobs and revenue that support its social and employment retraining programs. Habitat for Humanity receives reusable building and construction materials and sells them to generate revenue in support of its affordable housing programs.

The region built the CEC to meet the standards for LEED Silver certification, but actually achieved LEED Gold. The sustainable design focuses on energy and water conservation and enhanced stormwater management. Specific sustainable features include energy-efficient heating and lighting, management ponds to control stormwater runoff, rainwater collection and reuse in washrooms and the irrigation system, low-flow faucets and showerheads, and a ground-source heat pump. Local and recycled materials were used for construction. Adhesives, sealant paints, and

coatings low in volatile organic compounds were used to ensure better indoor air quality for workers.

Since the opening of the McCleary Court CEC, traffic has been steady. Weigh scales and a traffic counter record the number of residents disposing of residual waste. Social outcomes are monitored with customer satisfaction surveys. The region tracks the operational cost savings achieved by the energy- and water-efficient design features.

The McCleary Court CEC can serve as a model for similar projects in other municipalities. The idea of a sustainably designed, one-stop waste management service that focuses on the “3Rs” hierarchy has already been shared with Durham Region, Simcoe County, and other municipalities through presentations and tours. The CEC concept is flexible and can be adapted to a variety of communities and sites.

## Results

- McCleary Court CEC is expected to divert an additional 3,000 tonnes of waste from disposal annually, contributing to the region’s goal of 65 per cent waste diversion by the end of 2012.
- During the first ten and a half months of operation, almost 900,000 kilograms (900 tonnes) of material were diverted at the CEC.
- The facility has been awarded LEED Gold certification.
- Sustainable design features are expected to reduce water use by 75,774 litres annually — a reduction in municipal potable water use of more than 70 per cent.
- More than 90 per cent of the waste generated during the facility’s construction was diverted from landfill, and more than 29 per cent of the building materials are recycled.
- The CEC led to a direct increase in employment at Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity, who hired additional employees to help in the collection of reusable goods at the CEC.

## Lessons Learned

- PRACTICE “GOOD NEIGHBOUR” PRINCIPLES TO FOSTER LOCAL SUPPORT. Vaughan residents had been hesitant in the past to accept waste management facilities because of problems with the Keele Valley landfill. “We employed good neighbouring principles from the outset by consulting with the local community and ensuring that residents got clear and accurate information on what we proposed to construct,” said Kelly Spitzig, Acting Manager of Waste Diversion for York Region’s Environmental Services department. The region chose an accessible commercially zoned site, rather than a residentially zoned area. The facility has an aesthetically pleasing design, with features such as a canopy to protect users from the elements, landscaping to improve overall appearance, and black wrought-iron fencing.
- PARTNER WITH ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE EXPERTISE IN REUSE AND RECYCLING. As a central part of its strategy, York formed partnerships with two organizations that engage in reuse and recycling. “Goodwill and Habitat for Humanity are experts in the areas of reuse and recycling, so it made logical sense to work with the experts,” said Spitzig.
- FOCUS ON CONVENIENCE. “A foundation of York Region’s diversion programs is the awareness that convenience drives high participation,” said Spitzig. The principle of convenience should be a key focus in the design phase for any CEC.
- HAVE A PROJECT CHAMPION. Regional councillor Mario Ferri, chair of the region’s Solid Waste Management Committee and a Vaughan city councillor, was a champion for the project and promoted it to Vaughan residents and city council. His efforts helped to generate public support for the facility, said Spitzig.

## **Related and Future Initiatives**

The McCleary Court CEC is the first in a network of CECs planned by York Region. Currently, the region has budgeted for six CECs in total, although not all the locations have been identified. Two more CECs are in the planning stages: one for the City of Richmond Hill and another in the Town of Georgina (to be adapted from an existing facility).

## **Partners and Collaboration**

York Region  
City of Vaughan  
Toronto and Region Conservation Authority  
Goodwill  
Habitat for Humanity

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