

Portland federal building's facelift well under way; most bits getting recycled

The renovation of the Edith Green-Wendell Wyatt Federal Building shifts into a fresh phase. Workers are peeling off the structure's exterior precast concrete facing, and the top five of the 18 floors have been gutted.

Russ Buffington, spokesman for the General Services Administration, says most of the materials coming out of or off of the 35-year-old building are – you guessed it – getting recycled. Plus, the renovation designers are aiming to win the top “platinum” sustainability rating from the nonprofit U.S. Green Building Council.

“All the doors and floors and carpets, we've been able to recycle them,” he says.

Workers from Howard S. Wright Constructors are going clockwise around the exterior to take down the concrete; the GSA says the precast will be recycled for road construction.

The GSA has donated many of the recyclables to The ReBuilding Center in Northeast Portland. Already, five solid-core doors have been donated to a Northeast Portland church, and a local bar bought tongue-and-groove mahogany trim to reuse in a 1900s-era building.

What initially distinguished the renovation was a proposal to have plants flowing down the west face, which gets heaps of direct sun, to provide shade in summer, color in autumn and light in winter. But designers decided in August that the concept, while a novel idea on the drawing board, would have cost \$6 million to install and \$180,000 to maintain every year.



*General Services Administration
Plants seemed like a good idea, but not.*

So instead, the west face will be covered with aluminum rods. Aluminum is highly reflective, and the rods – the designers call them “reeds” — will provide about 50 percent of the shade.

Bonus style points: The building will have a cool beaded-curtain look.

A solar array on the roof is expected to offset up to 6 percent of the building's energy consumption.

The GSA also expects a 40 percent reduction in energy use from automatic lights that adjust for daylight and a 65 percent cut in water consumption through low-flow fixtures and rainwater capture. New elevators will generate power as they descend.

The federal workers, however, have not been recycled. The 1,200 employees have decamped to four other Portland buildings until they can move back in after the March 2013 completion.

The money for the project comes from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, AKA the federal stimulus bill.

-- Anne Saker



*Anne Saker/The Oregonian
The see-through Green-Wyatt federal
building Friday*