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Surrey City Centre Library Construction Begins

Scheduled to open Summer 2011, new library designed by Bing Thom Architects will be a critical anchor that will set the stage for the future development and transformation of downtown Surrey



Surrey, BC – Construction has started and footings are being poured for the new Surrey City Centre Library, designed by Bing Thom Architects (BTA) of Vancouver. Scheduled to open in spring 2011, this new building marks the beginning of a major civic investment in the area that will continue the transformation of downtown Surrey that began with BTA’s Central City project, completed in 2004. This new civic development will ultimately include a new city hall, large urban plaza, underground civic parkade, performing arts centre, and additional commercial space. All of these uses will be arranged adjacent to one of the most intensively used transit hubs in Metro Vancouver. As the first piece of this new development, Surrey City Centre Library is a critical anchor that sets the tone for future improvements in downtown Surrey.

“We are thrilled to again be contributing to the future of downtown Surrey,” stated Bing Thom. “This is a great opportunity to create something exciting for the future that will attract a wide variety of people to the downtown.”

Creating dynamic environments that look to the future of Surrey is nothing new to BTA. Nearly a decade ago, the firm designed the incredibly vibrant Central City, which sits down the street from the new Surrey Library. The architectural and social innovation evident at Central City—a fusion of office space, a shopping center and a university—is further exemplified in BTA’s library design.



Like Central City, the library encourages the gathering of diverse groups of people from the surrounding community. Its design features large windows, a welcoming entrance and central atrium with clear sight lines that allow visitors to quickly orient themselves in the space. The form of the building is inspired by the curvature of the adjacent University Boulevard with an added dynamism provided by their outward slope. Designed to LEED standards, the outward sloped walls also provide solar shading.

BTA understands that the role of the library is changing and that the book collection is no longer the central focus. With advances in easily available

electronic information and inter library loans, providing the appropriate spaces for evolving library activities is now the priority. These activities range from the traditional research and education roles to the need for libraries to become a point of connection and even a gathering place in the community. As a result, the design includes a diverse mixture of large interconnected “high” spaces with generous natural light and “low” more intimate spaces to accommodate the book stacks and individual activities like studying and writing. In all cases, the spaces have been deliberately kept informal to make the library feel like an extension of the patron’s living room. As Thom says, “The design evolves out of the need to provide a space for reading, studying, and above all, gathering as a community. This building is very flexible and will accommodate all of these purposes.”

Surrey is the second largest and fastest growing city in British Columbia. In fact, the population is expected to outgrow the originally proposed 65,000-square-foot library in a span of about five years. As a result, BTA encouraged the city to future-proof the building by constructing 78,000 square feet now. The excess space will be rented out for educational and other complimentary uses until the library can grow into it. Similarly, there is a full level being built underground, which can later be integrated into an underground civic parkade, another strategy for future expansion and integration with the community.

As BTA Principal Michael Heeney states, “Surrey City Centre Library is the beginning of a whole new civic initiative that’s going to further establish the downtown for this growing and important city.”

About Bing Thom Architects

Founded in 1982 in Vancouver, BTA has executed a wide spectrum of projects in Canada, Europe and China, from single-family residences to the design of entire cities. Principals Bing Thom and Michael Heeney, share a fundamental belief in the transformative power of great architecture to uplift, not only the physical, but also the economic and social conditions of a community. The firm’s belief in this power has become the grounding philosophy for the office, and has resulted in memorable architecture that consistently taps into something beyond aesthetics. This year, BTA will complete the firm’s first major US project, the new Arena Stage at the Mead Center for American Theater in Washington, D.C., to be followed by the opening of the East Trinity campus of Tarrant County College in Fort Worth Texas, which is the first phase of the Trinity River Uptown plan, the largest urban redevelopment currently being undertaken in the United States. Some of the firm’s other recent and current projects include Central City and Surrey City Centre Library, both in Surrey, British Columbia; and The Chan Centre for the Performing Arts in Vancouver. In 2011, Princeton Architectural Press will be publishing [Bing Thom Works](#), the first comprehensive monograph on the work of BTA. Bing Thom Architects has also been the recipient of numerous honors and awards, including the 2010 Architectural Firm Award from The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, the prestigious honor that can be awarded to a Canadian architectural practice.