



Tempe Transportation Center



The Tempe Transportation Center is as green as it gets. The sustainable story starts with the building's purpose—it's the hub of mass transit in Tempe—and extends to the workstations in the city's transportation department. Composed mostly of recycled materials, the Herman Miller Vivo frame-and-tile system becomes even greener with work surfaces made from rapidly renewable bamboo veneer.

**GOVERNMENT;
TEMPE, ARIZONA**

Topic:
*Collaboration
Sustainability*

Application:
*Collaboration/Team
Open Office
Private Office*

Project Scope:
*37 occupants, 30 workstations,
10 private offices, 10,000 square
feet of office space*

Herman Miller Product:
*Vivo® Interiors (forerunner to
Canvas Office Landscape™)
Tu™ Lateral Files
Tu Pedestals*

Program/Service:
Easy OptionsSM Capability

Year Completed:
2008



From its function to its furnishings, the Tempe Transportation Center achieves a shade of green few buildings can match.

Located in downtown Tempe near Arizona State University, the transportation center is recognized as a model of sustainable design by the Environmental Protection Agency and expects to earn the highest certification—LEED Platinum—from the U.S. Green Building Council.

“We knew this building would be highly visible,” says Bonnie Richardson, principal planner for the city of Tempe. “So we wanted it to show what can be accomplished when you integrate a variety of sustainable strategies—everything from the furnishings and finishes to the operations and maintenance.”

ENVIRONMENTAL SHOWPLACE

The sustainable story starts with the building's purpose; it's the hub of mass transit in Tempe, supporting both the city's main bus station and a stop on the light rail system extending throughout the metro area. There's even bicycle storage on the ground floor for commuters who want to pedal partway and take mass transit the rest of the way.

A three-story architectural stunner of glass and metal, the Tempe Transportation Center is an environmental showplace. Roof vegetation, solar hot water system, retractable shades that open and close with the sun—not an opportunity was missed. The building also boasts just about every conservation feature imaginable—it's expected to use 52 percent less energy than standard construction of comparable size, according to computer models.

On the second floor, where the city's transportation department is located, every office and workstation is awash in natural light, so much that overhead lights and task lights are rarely used.

Work surfaces and overhead cabinet doors are made with rapidly renewable bamboo veneer. The central tiles on Vivo workstations are covered with Kira, a proprietary corn-based fabric.



"Sometimes, we turn on a small bank of lights in the reception area just so visitors know we're open," Richardson says.

VIVO LENDS A HAND

Even the furnishings contribute to the building's stewardship, most notably Vivo Interiors (the forerunner to Canvas Office Landscape). The Vivo frame-and-tile system is used for the transportation department's open workstations, while Vivo components hang from movable walls forming the private offices.

Why Vivo? Longevity for starters.

"When you're buying furniture for city government, it better be durable, because you know it's going to be around a long time," Richardson says. "The city of Tempe still uses Herman Miller furniture bought more than 30 years ago."

Also appealing was Vivo's makeup—it's composed of 54-percent recycled materials. Tempe added to the sustainability by specifying the proprietary Herman Miller Kira fabric for the central Vivo tile on each station. Made entirely from corn—no petroleum extracts like most fabrics—Kira can be composted at the end of its useful life.

And, the project also received bamboo veneer for all work surfaces and overhead cabinet doors. Tempe requested it as a special order through Herman Miller Options®. Rapidly renewable within five years (compared with decades for conventional hardwood veneers) bamboo can contribute to LEED credits.

"The environmental merits of bamboo are becoming widely recognized," says Duane Veldman of the Herman Miller Options team. "We get special requests for it at least every couple of weeks."

"We incorporated bamboo partly to educate visitors," Richardson says. "It gives us a chance to talk about sustainability. People see how beautiful the bamboo is, ask about it, and then hear its environmental story—it's kind of an 'aha' moment."

[left] Planners specified banks of Tu lateral files to define space and serve as informal gathering areas.

[right] Glass tiles atop Vivo workstations help spread natural light throughout the office.

Vivo even played a role in spreading the natural light. Workstations on the perimeter have lower sides so as not to block windows, while many in the interior are topped with glass tiles to let the light flow through.

Planners opted to arrange the open Vivo workstations in 120-degree configurations, avoiding the sameness of square cubicles and creating a more inviting layout.

"Some of the traffic engineers moving from private offices weren't excited about the prospect of open workstations," Richardson says. "The natural look of the Vivo layout helped smooth the transition, providing privacy and a quiet work environment. Plus, we were able to fine-tune the layout to give everyone a window view and create sitting areas for informal interaction in leftover spaces."

TU PLAYS A ROLE

To further encourage interaction, the transportation department turns work areas into neighborhoods by defining them with banks of Tu lateral files from Herman Miller. Another Tu product—the cushion-top mobile pedestal—is used in most workstations for both storage and guest seating.

"The file banks put shared resources right outside work areas," says Barb Skrzecz, sales account manager with Goodmans Interior Structures, a Herman Miller dealer in Phoenix. "Instead of disappearing into back rooms, employees gather around the file banks, which create impromptu conference rooms without walls."

For the city of Tempe, the new transportation center has become every bit the environmental icon first envisioned.

"I've probably toured more than 2,000 people through this building," Richardson says. "They always say the same thing: 'It must be great to work here.'"

Photo credit (pages 1 and 3): © Bill Timmerman, Timmerman Photography, Phoenix, AZ

Proto credit (page 2): © Al Payne/A.F. Payne Photographic, Tempe, AZ

© 2010 Herman Miller, Inc., Zeeland, Michigan
® ●HermanMiller, Herman Miller Options, and Vivo are among the registered trademarks of Herman Miller, Inc.
™ Canvas Office Landscape and Tu are among the trademarks of Herman Miller, Inc.
SM Easy Options is among the service marks of Herman Miller, Inc.