



THE BUILDER

It took twenty months of hard work and a builder who could deliver the project on time and on budget. Ventana Construction was the general contractor that worked with OpenRoad Auto Group to make OpenRoad Lexus Richmond a reality. We spoke recently to Ventana president Jim Bond and director of operations Gene Gerwing about this project and future trends in construction.

Congratulations on a job well done! Commercial and industrial building permits are way up this year in the Lower Mainland. Are you feeling the growth trend, too?

JB: We definitely have been very busy and we do a lot of repeat business. We're working on 10 to 12 projects right now. This year we've added 6-7 projects and probably 20 percent to our office staff. We're lucky to be in Canada, lucky to be in BC, and lucky to be on the west coast.

And you're moving into a new location...

JB: Ventana built the Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers building. It's their 165,000-square-foot, LEED®-gold world headquarters. They were looking for a tenant that would fit well and 15,000 square feet is for us. That houses 40 Ventana staff and we can go up to 50 in this location. It's fun to be in a building we built. It has a cafeteria and a gym and glass on all four sides of our office.

GG: It's in the Glenlyon Business Park where Ventana has built about 80% of the development.

OpenRoad set out to make their Richmond store the flagship in Canada, offering a new level of luxury. How did that translate over to Ventana on the construction side?

GG: On the service side OpenRoad Lexus Richmond is more like a laboratory with tile floor, an actual ceiling instead of being exposed, pneumatic air-powered overhead service doors that open up and disappear into

the ceiling. There are some things that have never been done in the Lower Mainland. A typical service area usually has oily rags. Even the oil and water dispensers disappear into the walls. It's pretty spectacular for service bays. In Richmond, you wouldn't think of installing in-ground hoists.

JB: Richmond is wet and sandy and all fill, so there's not a lot of underground parking or structures.

GG: There are a lot of other things you wouldn't normally see. This store has a coffee shop, massage chairs and amenities. There's a second-floor luxury car display area, which is unusual. There are two car elevators because there are a lot of cars to get on the site including 100-120 parking on the roof. You're parking cars on every level. It's a three-storey structure, not just a single-storey building. I don't think there's another local automotive retailer with parking on the second floor next to office space, with rooftop parking, and none with a second-floor showroom and main-floor showroom.

Tell me about the construction process.

JB: Construction is a huge team process. Whether it's the architect or the mechanical engineer, the owners or dealing with neighbours. It always boils down to relationships. We pride ourselves on our relationships that lead to repeat business. People are very, very important.

GG: The owner has all kinds of ideas that he wants to incorporate in the building. We have to prioritize what ideas are most important and make sure when all the drawings are done that they're still willing to pay for the building. We work in reality, and juggling that relationship between the owner, the architect and ourselves is key. It's not an easy thing. We have to be the reality factor in the cost.

JB: We spend a lot of time on the pre-construction phase working with the designers. A lot of times the owner works with the architect and hires the construction contractor later, but we like to get involved as soon as the architect is hired so we're involved in the whole pre-construction phase. We think we can add value – value engineering to align costs, budgeting, solutions...

This facility is targeting a LEED® silver certification and over half of your current projects are pursuing LEED® certification. With the strong movement towards greener buildings, how has that affected the construction side?

JB: There's no question now that both on the real estate side and with people who are leasing space, having a LEED® building is adding value to a piece of real estate. We're taking it seriously. We have two LEED® Accredited Professional staff, a number of LEED® Green Associates and we're involved in a lot of LEED® projects. We're working on expanding our LEED® qualifications.

What are some of the latest green building options you're seeing? Where are we headed?

GG: LEED® is an evolving program and the green movement is definitely growing. As energy costs increase, it makes more and more sense for people to adopt these ideas. Car dealerships appear to be contrary to the green movement with all kinds of glass and things that, in a LEED® building, you're trying to cut or reduce. It's very difficult to do for car dealerships. OpenRoad is probably a pioneer in saying, "We know it's difficult but we're going to make it work anyway."

People are sure lowering the use of water beyond the norm, like recycling rain water. Energy sources, whether it's digging a hole in the ground or solar energy. Green roofs, people seem to want to adopt that with a roof garden. These are all on the upswing to improve the saleability of their buildings.

What other prominent buildings have you built that people would recognize?

JB: The Langley Events Centre, Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers, Rocky Mountaineer Rail Station in Vancouver, Ballard Power research facility, Future Shop on Scott Road in Surrey, Prospera Centre in Chilliwack... We're also building the new Mountain Equipment Co-op in North Vancouver, with more to come! 📍

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