



St. Christopher Catholic Elementary School from addition, showing the lower green roof and undulating sound-dispersion wall that faces the expressway.

PASSA ASSOCIATES ARCHITECTS

Environmentally conscious firm designs with responsibility to aesthetic, spatial, and financial needs

BY DEBORAH HELD

AT A GLANCE

LOCATION:
WINDSOR, ON

AREA OF SPECIALTY:
GREEN ARCHITECTURE
FOR INSTITUTIONAL,
MULTIFAMILY RESIDEN-
TIAL, COMMERCIAL,
AND INDUSTRIAL
PROJECTS

EMPLOYEES:
CORE OF 4, PLUS REGU-
LAR CONTRIBUTORS

WHILE MANY ARCHITECTS ARE JUMPING aboard the sustainable-design bandwagon, few architects and their firms are as deeply rooted to the task as the designers at Passa Associates Architects.

Led by principal Joseph Passa, this Windsor, Ontario firm has excelled, since 2002, in the concept of green architecture—negating the carbon imprint created by the building and living processes through sustainable design.

“Creating living buildings with high-

performance façades and infrastructure that also allow nature to recreate itself within them [through green roofs and green walls] can offset our carbon footprint,” says Passa, who has traveled the globe studying energy and environmental leadership.

A member of the Canada Green Building Council, Passa and his team are LEED accredited professionals. Passa himself is also a member of the Ontario Association of Architects, a member of the Royal Architectural Institute of

Canada, and previously a certified engineering technologist in Alberta.

Perhaps most remarkable of all is the fact that a Passa Associates Architects project has never come in over budget—a rare feat in this industry, much less for a firm that delves into institutional, multifamily residential, commercial, and industrial projects. In Passa’s opinion, architectural excellence involves not only a commitment to the environment but a responsibility to a client’s aesthetic, spatial, and financial needs.

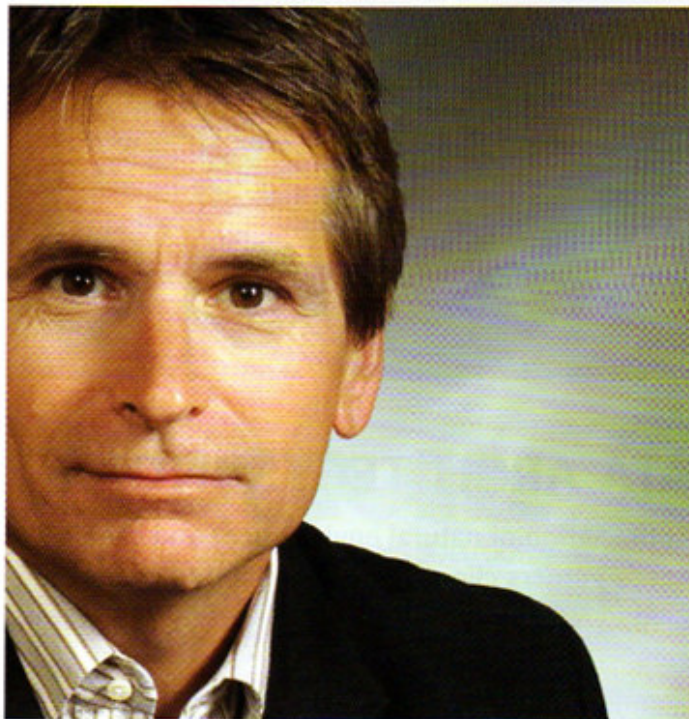
"We solve spatial problems as sensitively as possible," Passa says. "We go into all projects without any preconceived notions of what was done in the past; rather, we look instead at a new development within its site context and client concerns for space to determine the best resolution."

Established in 1994, Passa Associates Architects is a recognized leader in green, or "live," roofing, and the firm has been called upon in workshops to assist the City of Toronto with its own green-roof policy. Its other environmentally friendly design objectives include using high-insulation values without thermal bridging, installing highly efficient fiberglass windows, and utilizing the latest computer technologies to model and quantify a building's energy usage.

Regarding the company's dedication to green roofing and fiscal responsibility, two of its most remarkable examples were the challenging projects of Windsor's Our Lady of Mount Carmel Catholic Elementary School and the St. Christopher Catholic Elementary School, built in 2003 and 2005, respectively. The schools have become the new standards of efficient educational building in the province and now the country. When built, St. Christopher's was the third-most energy-efficient elementary school in Canada. Both schools feature, among other innovations, the first use of live garden roofing (to offset the urban heat-island effect and reduce cooling costs). St. Christopher features a 5,000-square-foot garden roof. Both schools came in largely under budget (St. Christopher, specifically, was completed at \$350,000 under budget). The St. Christopher School won the 2005 Conservation Award for Education from the Essex Regional Conservation Authority. Thanks to this effort, the Windsor Essex County District School Board became the first school board in Ontario to mandate high-performance energy efficiency through the Commercial

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Joseph Passa, Principal



Building Incentive Program, with green roofing becoming a requirement of all new construction projects.

Other Passa Associates Architects awards include:

- Awards of Excellence from the Windsor Construction Association in 2000 and 2003;
- 2006 Business Excellence Award for Technology from the Windsor District Chamber of Commerce.

Passa himself is a highly sought lecturer and has spoken at conferences in Ot-

tawa, Toronto, Boston, and Windsor. He has practiced architecture all over Canada and in the USA, Australia, and New Zealand, where he graduated from the School of Architecture at Auckland University.

Going forward, Passa is working to design buildings that are "net zero in energy use while at the same time being energy generators that can help solve our global greenhouse gas concerns." Given his credentials and achievements, our communities will hold interest in seeing that come to fruition. CBQ