

The Museum's Decision to Go Green

The Hands On Children's Museum believes in the interconnectedness of all things. We want to inspire children and families to appreciate the natural world and understand its importance to their future health and wellbeing.



The New Museum

Since its inception, the Museum has maintained a commitment to a green vision through our exhibits, education programs, and operations. This commitment exemplifies the values of our region's history, which is inextricably linked to the Northwest's precious natural resources.

The new Museum provides an exciting opportunity to deepen this commitment by intentionally designing the facility for sustainability, by cleaning a brownfield site, and by designing educational experiences that foster a sense of environmental stewardship.

Look for green signs inside and out of the museum that point out our green features.



We are grateful for support from the Washington State Department of Ecology and Thurston County Solid Waste.

Our Distinguishing Go Green Features:

- Brownfield redevelopment that cleaned an industrial site and restores it to public use.
- New East Bay Plaza and HOCM's Outdoor Discovery Center maximize open space & create new habitat.
- Water efficient native plant landscape that reduces irrigation needs by 50 percent.
- Low-water temperature-loop connection to Hands On from neighboring LOTT Wastewater Treatment Facility to heat and cool the new museum.
- Use of regional and reclaimed building materials throughout the facility.
- Use of reclaimed water in the museum.
- Collection storage for numerous recyclables as part of waste management operations.
- The use of low-emitting building materials in exhibits and interiors including paints, adhesives, and flooring wherever possible.
- Daylight in 75 percent of the spaces and views in 90 percent of the spaces to reduce energy and lift moods.
- Building orientation to the south to take advantage of the sun.
- Storm water design and quality control.
- Museum access by alternative transportation including bus, bikes and walking. The Museum is designed with a bus stop nearby and bike parking. We provide staff with bicycle storage, showers and changing rooms.
- Intentionally designed exhibits that connect children to nature, use sustainable materials and reduce waste



Our mission:

Hands On Children's Museum stimulates curiosity, creativity and learning through fun, interactive exhibits, and programs for children, families, and school groups.

Our address:

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Getting here:



Bus Routes:

Hands On Children's Museum



Take a tour of our new building and its environmentally-friendly green features



All Hands On materials printed on FSC certified paper.



Going Green at Hands On, and at home!

1 Bike It! Bus It! Walk It!

At Hands On we make it easy for our visitors and workers to get here without a car. We are centrally located for access by bike, bus, or on foot.

From home, going places without a car has its advantages: you save gas, keep the air cleaner, and get exercise. Where can you go without a car?

2 Rain Gardens

At Hands On we've created a rain garden. This is a garden where the rainwater can sink in and slowly release back into the soil. This helps prevent flooding.

At home, you can build your own rain garden. Get more information from the City of Olympia Dirt Works program at www.olympiawa.gov.

3 From Roof to Garden

At Hands On we save rainwater from the roof in this cistern. It holds over 2,000 gallons! When our gardens need water, we've usually got plenty.

At home you can collect water too. Small cisterns can connect right to the gutters, saving water for a sunny day. What other ways can you save water?

4 Native Plants Drink Less

At Hands On we use many plants that grow naturally in this area. These are called native plants—happy in our wet winters and dry summers.

At home, native plants can save water too. Vine maple, red huckleberry, wild strawberry, and western red cedar all thrive here. Give one a try in your garden!

5 Our Water is Working Hard

At Hands On we save water by using reclaimed water—water that's been used, cleaned, and can be reused. For example, after you brush your teeth, the water goes to the LOTT treatment plant. They filter and clean it, and then pipe it here. We reuse the reclaimed water to flush toilets and water our gardens.

Water is precious and we can't make any new water!

6 Facing South for the Sun

Hands On faces south to take advantage of the sun. In the winter, the low-angled sun warms our building. In summer, the sun is higher in the sky, so we stay cool thanks to the building's shady eaves.

At home, what's your favorite sunny spot?

7 Open Windows Keep It Cool

At Hands On the windows are natural air conditioners. When we open the lower windows, cool air comes in. As the air heats, it rises. Fans next to the upper windows suck the hot air out of the building.

At home, fans, shades, and open windows are a big help when it's hot.

8 Warm Neighbors

Hands On gets its heat from down the street! The LOTT treatment plant cleans water after it's used. The cleaning process creates methane gas. LOTT captures the gas and uses it to heat big pipes filled with water. The pipes run to Hands On, giving us energy to heat and cool our museum.

9 From Brownfield to Beautiful

Hands On is built on a historic industrial site, or "brownfield." Local governments worked together to clean it up. They removed and capped some of the soil. Then they brought in new soil where it was needed. Now it's safe and beautiful. Cleaner land near the water makes Puget Sound healthier.

10 Local Materials & the Museum

At Hands On many of our building materials were produced in the region. Things like countertops, lumber, and siding came from Washington and Oregon. This supported local businesses, saved gas, and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.

At home, what can you buy that comes from our region?

11 Recycling Top to Bottom

At Hands On we recycled and reused more than half of the waste we created during construction. Now that we're open, we're still recycling. As part of our green housekeeping, we recycle food waste, cardboard, paper, metal, and glass.

At home, what do you reuse and recycle?

12 Green Materials Matter

At Hands On we use "green" paints, carpets, and flooring. They make our inside spaces healthier for all of us. Green materials don't send harmful chemicals into the air. They are also called "low-VOC" materials.

At home, you can use green products too. Check your local stores for low-VOC products.

1st Floor



2nd Floor

