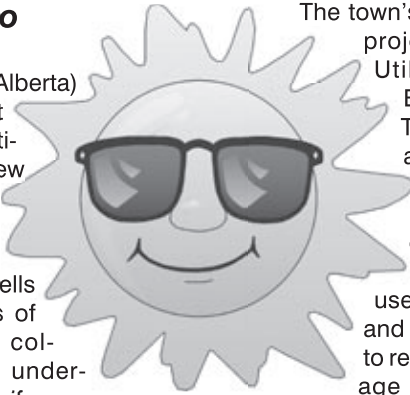


Okotoks taps into solar energy

The Town of Okotoks (Alberta) could become the first community on the continent to implement a new solar energy system for residences.

The system collects solar energy through cells mounted on the roofs of houses. The energy collected is then stored underground (via rocks, aquifers or caverns) throughout the summer. In winter, the thermal energy is retrieved from storage and distributed to residences through a central district heating system.



The town's main partner in the project is Earth Energy Utility Corporation, a European company. The technology has a successful history in Europe.

About 80% of energy use in a typical residence is used for space heating and hot water. According to research, the solar storage system could meet

90% of home energy demands, providing a 72% reduction in demand on conventional energy sources. The town hopes to receive funding for a feasibility study on implementing the system.

Pedestrian-activated traffic signal

This year, the city of Rockville, MD, began using a 'pedestrian activated' traffic signal. Almost all jurisdictions install traffic signals based upon traffic count, and the signals are timed to help maintain the flow of vehicles. However, this signal is designed chiefly to help pedestrians and is regulated by the need of pedestrians to cross.

The signal flashes yellow on one side of the street and red on the other side of the street 24-hours a day. When a pedestrian pushes the button on a post (at either side), the signal turns red at all four approaches to allow a safe crossing for pedestrians. After activating the signal function, pedestrians will have 24 seconds to cross the intersection before the signal returns to its flashing phases for vehicles.

The city hopes to encourage more pedestrian traffic by providing safer streets to cross.

For more information contact Neil H. Greenberger, Public Information Manager, City of Rockville, MD at 240-314-8115.



County Lane design looks attractive

The City of Vancouver has developed an environmentally sustainable 'Country Lane' design that makes back lanes greener and more attractive. The first of three Country Lanes was constructed in November 2002 as part of a demonstra-

tion project, with the second two lanes presently under construction.

This alternative to full-width asphalt lane paving is in response to the city's goal to reduce environmental impacts and to create a more liveable community. The lane features two narrow strips of concrete that provide a smooth driving surface. The area between and beside these bands is made up of structural grass, a rigid plastic grid system that can support vehicle weight and prevent both soil rutting and grass root compaction. The road base is composed of a mixture of aggregate that provides structural stability, and a sand/soil mixture that allows for drainage and provides the nutritional soil components required for grass growth. This engineered soil, or 'dirty rock', was developed by City of Vancouver staff.

Country Lanes allow rainwater to percolate over vegetation and through the ground. The natural absorption allowed by this combined lane surface reduces discharge into the storm sewer system, recharges groundwater, and reduces

peak flows into rivers. The increased vegetation will naturally filter storm water and improve air quality. Aside from the environmental aspects, this innovative sustainable design also has many other advantages including aesthetic beauty and traffic calming techniques.

Millennium Card program

The Millennium Card is a service offered by Strathcona County (a 'specialized municipality' in Alberta) to increase recreational opportunities for residents and to manage and track large customer volume. Designed to provide residents with access to a variety of activities within a less restricted schedule, the program offers a monthly pass valid at three major recreation complexes: the Kinsmen Leisure Centre, the Glen Allan Recreation Complex, and Millennium Place.

Since implementation, over 10,000 people have committed to the Millennium Card, representing a 1,200% increase in annual pass holders.

Users can pay for their Millen-

nium Card through a new automated process that reduces administrative costs by withdrawing pre-authorized monthly payments directly from their bank accounts. In addition to improved customer convenience, this automated process has also decreased admission line-ups at facilities.

In our next issue:

- 2003 Convention Revisited
- 2004 M.O.S. and Trade show

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