

Discovery Museum wants to go green

Executive director: new facility's goal is highest environmental certifications

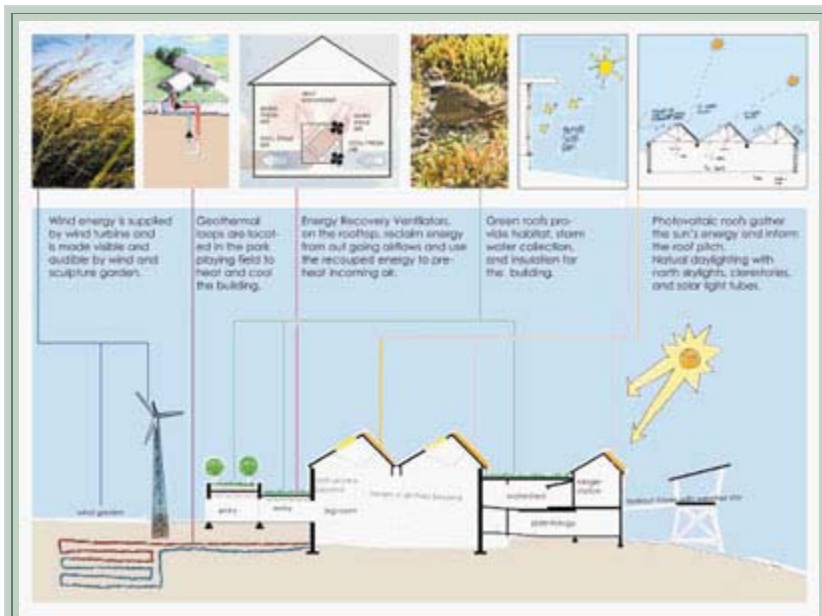
By Mark R. Dorolek
The Winchester Star

Winchester — Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum leaders want to have one of the highest environmental certifications in the country for their new facility.

Peggy McKee, the museum's executive director, said new technology and materials would make the planned facility the most environmentally friendly in the state.

"We want the Discovery Museum to be 'green' in every way except the color," she said alongside local and global industry leaders and a professor from Virginia Tech during a press conference on Thursday.

"Green" refers to using technology and materials to construct a building with the lowest possible environmental impact on the surrounding area.



The \$8 million building will have a host of technologies to benefit the environment, McKee said.

She also said the technology and materials were more expensive, but noted that this would pay off in the long run: "We want a building that will make a statement."

Phil Glaize, chairman of the capital fundraising campaign, said the museum has been pledged more than half of the money needed to construct the facility.

Reader and Swartz Architects of Winchester, which is designing the proposed new Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, unveiled several illustrations and renderings spotlighting the green concept on Thursday afternoon.
(Illustration by Reader and Swartz Architects)

The 26,000-square-foot building, planned for a three-acre site in Jim Barnett Park, will have a wind turbine, a sod roof with landscaping, a closed-loop geothermal heating and cooling system — which uses the earth’s natural warmth to heat and cool the building — and many other technologies, McKee said.

With these advances, the museum is hoping to receive a platinum rating — a nationally accepted designation that denotes high-performing green buildings — from the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design. “The new Discovery Museum will be a case of sustainable design,” McKee said.

The building, scheduled for a groundbreaking this year, could receive the platinum certification with the help of Jim Jones, a professor in Virginia Tech’s College of Architecture and Urban Design, she said.

Jones said he wanted to be part of creating “buildings that teach,” and the museum would do that by using technology and designs created by Virginia Tech.

He said the building and surrounding area, which will integrate existing features such as pedestrian trails and an amphitheater in the park, would be designed to teach people about the environmentally friendly features used at the site.

The project will become a test ground for new technology and materials and become a case study for his students, Jones said.

Chuck Swartz of Reader and Swartz Architects PC of Winchester, the firm designing the site, said the facility will be a learning tool for everyone.

“Basically, the building will be the largest exhibit at the building,” he said.

The new facility could evolve from a local attraction into a magnet for people from all over the region, Swartz said.

Dave Blount, senior vice president with the American Woodmark Foundation of Winchester, said he was proud the foundation could donate money to the project.



Chuck Swartz, whose firm Reader and Swartz Architects of Winchester is designing the proposed new

Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum, makes a presentation during a press conference about the facility on Thursday.
(Photo by Rick Foster)

“It was very easy for us to get behind what the Discovery Museum does,” he said.

Deb Brown, account manager for Amvic, a Canadian-based firm that makes environmentally friendly insulated concrete forms that will be used as one of the building materials, was another participant in the press conference.

She said a problem with building projects such as the museum is that industries are not aware of alternatives: “The biggest challenge for us is getting the word out to build better buildings.”

Michael Maher, construction manager for REHAU — a German-based company that will provide an energy-efficient heating and air conditioning system — said he will continue his outreach to other companies to provide innovative solutions around the world.

George Stickman, construction project manager for Howard Shockey and Sons Inc., the general contractor for the new building, said he was glad the firm was helping a local entity, adding that it would not charge the museum for any cost increases incurred by subcontractors.