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The Archives of Ontario project involved the development of a new 130,000 square-foot archives facility at York University’s campus in Toronto, Ontario. The new, self-contained, academic research facility houses over \$400 million in archive collections owned by the Province of Ontario and meets international archival standards.

This state-of-the-art headquarters for the Archives of Ontario provides the means to showcase some of the Archives’ most valuable collections by serving a broader clientele, including school groups and delegations. The connected York Research Tower rises above the Archives of Ontario and occupies the rest of the building complex.

Project facts

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| Location York, Ontario, Canada | Client York University Development Corporation | Value (NPV) C\$85 million |
| Plenary Americas' role Developer Equity investor Project sponsor Financial arranger | Builder PCL Constructors Canada | Architect Bregman + Hamann |
| Services Morguard Investments | Financial close date May 2007 | Completion date November 2008 |
| Contract terms 36.5 years, DBFM | Awards • LEED® Silver certified | Project website www.archives.gov.on.ca |

The archives portion of the new building encompasses three floors and is certified to LEED® Silver standards. The building features sophisticated mechanical and electrical systems that allow stringent temperature and humidity levels to be maintained within the vault areas.

Substantial completion was reached in February 2008, on time and on budget. The facility is currently operational.



Design features

The design and construction process was fast-tracked to include a seven-storey York Research Tower with the Archives project. This significantly increased the coordination efforts for structural systems.

The design included a unique foundation solution involving dampening mechanisms to account for vibrations from a future subway tunnel and station and bridging of track spans to be carried under the foundation.

Construction had to be sensitive to Campus environment which entailed restrictions on noise generation and carefully scheduled service shutdowns for connections to the central steam and power system to minimize the impact on other campus buildings.

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The environmental monitoring requirements for the archival storage areas are amongst the most stringent in the world. The facility was designed with complex gas detection systems to continuously monitor and detect particulates and airborne contaminants.

There are very few facilities in the world that have the ability to monitor the environment continuously and with the same level of precision.

Innovations

During preferred proponent negotiations, York University decided to proceed with an additional six-storey tower consisting of research space and the Board of Governors' offices. Plenary assisted in negotiations with the prime contractor PCL, to integrate the new research tower with the design of the Archives of Ontario on a fast-track basis, bringing the total development to 275,000 sq. ft. This added significantly to the density on the site to take full advantage of the future adjacent subway station. Plenary was successful in securing an amended planning approval from the City of Toronto in order to include this additional development within the original time-frame envisioned for the asset.

Plenary arranged a financing structure that was able to receive a long-term credit rating of A, even though there was no compensation on termination from the ultimate client in certain circumstances.

A structure was developed that allowed York University to retain control of the facility in lease termination situations and refit the building for its own specific requirements.

Local economic impacts

Job creation

During the construction period, the Archives of Ontario project created hundreds of jobs for local construction workers, contractors and sub-trades. At the peak of construction there were over 150 workers on site daily.