

# Banking on Change

Canada's largest credit union brings its values to life with its fresh reno  
by Kristen Hilderman

The recent renovation of two Vancity branches may seem strictly esthetic, but at the heart of the redesign is an upheaval of the way Canada's largest credit union does business.

Under its 'Good Money' brand, which Vancity launched in 2011, the two upgraded branches—opened in October and November 2012—represent a renewed emphasis on sustainable banking and community building.

For Vancity COO Rick Sielski, the remodel is a tangible way of bringing the company's mandate into the branches. "Our organization did not view this as a renovation," says Sielski. "It had to be—and has been—a change in how we do business."

The change is a confluence of physical appearance and internal operations, turning the branches into community hubs, increasing the level of customer-service interaction and putting the focus on Vancity's values-based banking model. "On the business side, we're looking to have a larger percentage of businesses line up with the sectors that we think build stronger communities, whether that's social housing or local, organic foods," says Sielski.

Moving forward, these two branches will act as prototypes in determining how to redesign the interiors and day-to-day operations of Vancity's other 58 locations. ■

## The Think Tank

Sielski describes the Think Tank as a "business incubator." Small businesses that are Vancity members can meet privately in an intimate setting with their own team or with their financial advisers.



## Coin Counter

The coin counter is for both members and non-members and has no associated fees. The machine dispenses a receipt that can be exchanged for cash at a teller.



## The Community Stage

Through surveys and research, Vancity determined that free meeting space was in the top five needs of the South Burnaby and Port Coquitlam communities where the new branches are located. Members, not-for-profit organizations and community groups can use this space at no cost, 24 hours a day. "It's part of what we do to make the branch a community asset," says Sielski.



Financial Service Rep Pods

Teller desks were opened up on the sides to allow members to come around and view the computer screen, interacting on a more personal level. "It makes for a more intimate relationship rather than 'them and us,'" says Sielski. Moving the cash dispenser between each teller pod also means staff never turn their backs on members.

## Concierge Desk and Art Installation

Vancity commissioned an installation by local artists Jasna Sokolovic and Noel O'Connell to display behind the concierge desk, where staff members are poised and ready to discern the needs of anyone who enters the branch. "That position is crucial because [the concierge] knows everything that is going on within Vancity," says Sielski.

## Sustainable Lighting

The custom-made drum lights were crafted from used Vancity marketing materials and recycled resin.

## The Gift

Local small businesses whose values align with Vancity's are invited to display their products and talk to Vancity members. "We wanted a place that shows that we support our members," says Sielski, adding that it has been an effective way to connect Vancity's business members with its retail members. The Gift display operates on a rotating basis and gives priority to member businesses.

