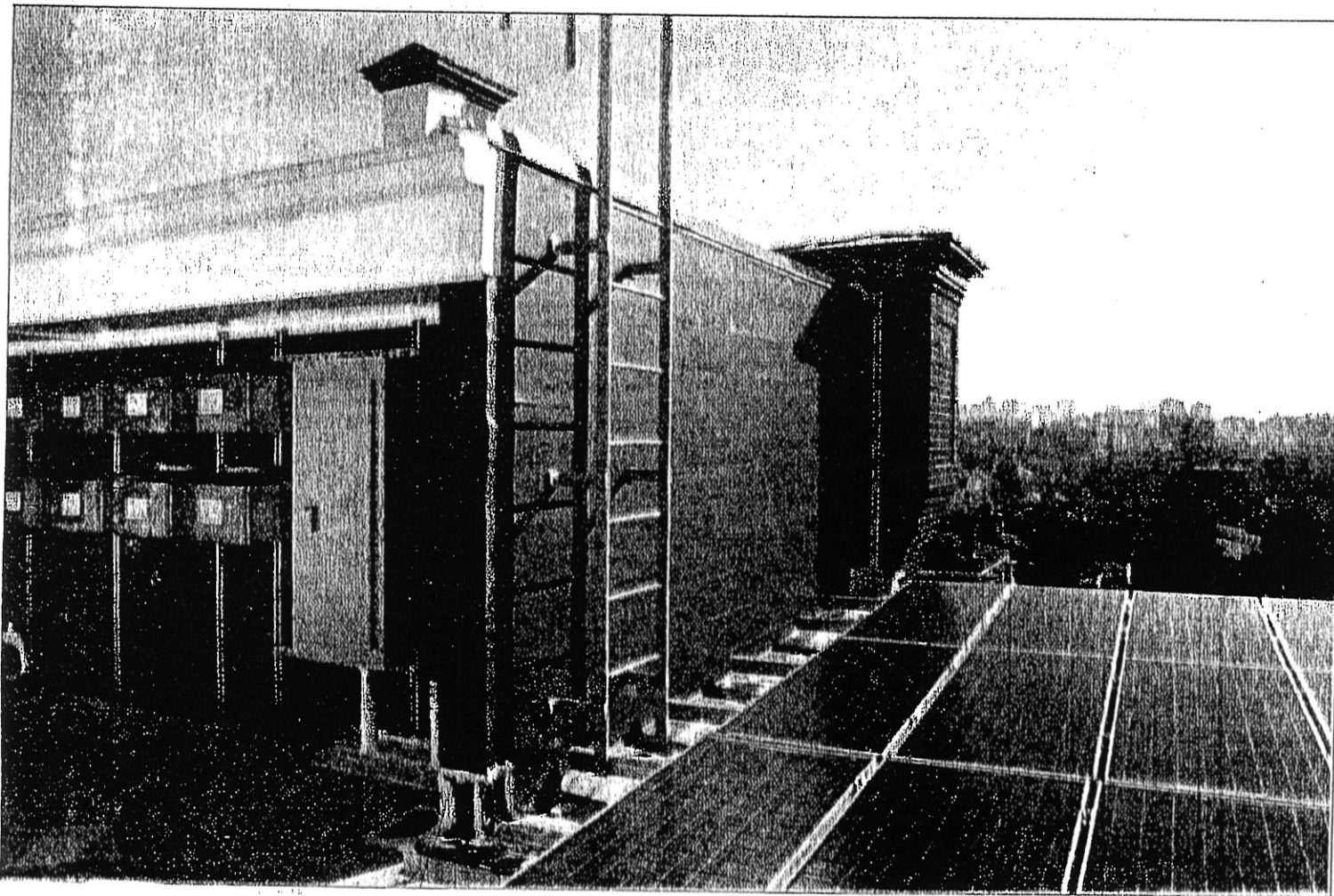


CANTABRIGIA

It's easy to be green



STAFF PHOTOS BY KATE FLOCK

Solar panels and inverters sit atop the new City Hall Annex building.

City Hall Annex is first green municipal building in the state

By Deborah Elsner
CHRONICLE STAFF

Four years ago, city employees working in the City Hall Annex on Broadway were breathing air so unhealthy that the building had to be closed down.

Today, those same employees are breathing some of the healthiest air in the city or, if they are in one of the two public meeting rooms, 100 percent outside air.

The first municipal green building in the commonwealth, City Hall Annex (McCusker Center) opened last week. A grand opening celebration will be held tonight from 4:30 to 7.

"This shows that the city is a leader, and this shows if we can do it, anybody can do it," said City Councilor Henrietta Davis.

Davis introduced the order requiring all new construction in the city to conform to green standards.

Numerous new technologies combine to reduce the building's energy consumption by almost 56 percent over a conventionally constructed building of the same size, scope and purpose. That will result in a \$25,000 to \$30,000 annual savings, according to city staff.

Construction began on the building, whose address is 344 Broadway (formerly 57 Inman St.) in October 2002. The renovations cost

approximately \$6 million.

Five city departments occupy the 33,216-square-foot building: Community Development, Traffic, Parking and Transportation, the Cambridge Arts Council, the Animal Commission and the Conservation Commission. The building includes two public meeting rooms and an art gallery.

The building is heated and cooled through a ground-source heat pump that taps into groundwater in three 1,500-foot deep wells on the site. In the winter, eight water-to-water pumps convert 40-degree ground water to 120-degree water that flows through dual temperature pumps in the buildings' walls; in the summer, they convert

55-degree groundwater to 45-degree water to cool the offices.

There was initial concern that the well water would have to be purified.

"It turns out the water below this building is unbelievably pure. We were joking that the city should bottle it and call it Inman Springs," said Chris Schaffner, an energy efficiency expert with Arup, the Cambridge firm hired by the city for this project.

Solar panels on the roof will produce about 10 percent of the building's energy, and all light fix-

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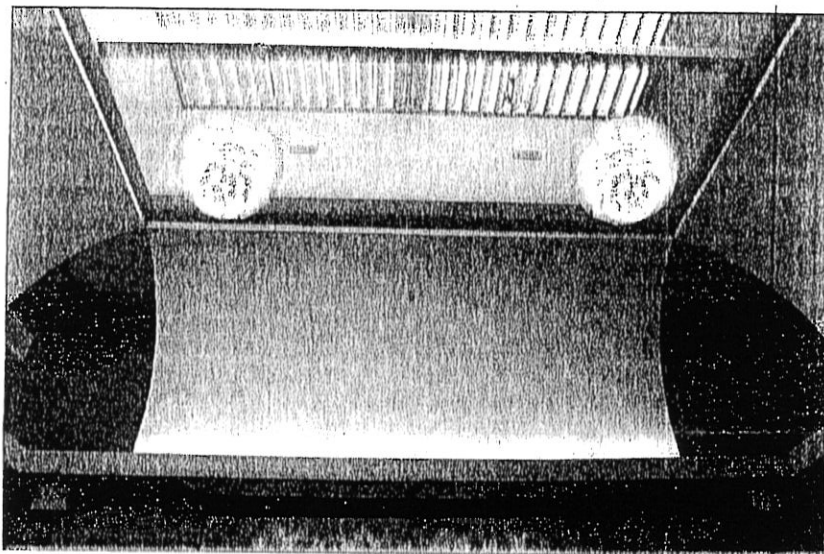
tures in the building use low-energy light bulbs. Many office lights operate on motion sensor and automatically shut off when the room is unoccupied.

But many offices won't need artificial light during the day; 90 percent of the building has a view of the outside.

"It turns out with good natural light, people are happier and healthier," Schaffner said.

But the biggest difference between this new building and the old is the air quality. The City Hall Annex was originally closed in 2000 due to mold problems that resulted in unhealthy air quality.

The remodel used only air-



STAFF PHOTOS BY KATE FLOCK

The design of the new City Hall Annex allows more natural light into the building.

friendly materials. All stains, paints and carpet glues used in the project emit low amounts of gases, which eliminates the "new car smell" generally associated with new construction. "It doesn't

smell like it just opened," Schaffner said.

All visible wood in the building is from sustainable forests, and Consigli Construction recycled 80 percent of its construc-

tion materials.

The city is currently completing the application for a LEEDS designation and is aiming for a Gold standard, the second highest honor.