



New Integrated Design Lab Opens In Boise BetterBricks expands services to support high-performance building in Idaho

Architects and engineers in Idaho now have a resource close to home to help them incorporate high performance building practices into their commercial building designs. BetterBricks, a nonprofit initiative of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance, in partnership with the University of Idaho, Idaho Power Company and the Idaho Department of Water Resources Energy Division, has launched an Integrated Design Lab (IDL), currently located at the University of Idaho campus in Boise.

The new lab will help design professionals take advantage of the design and financial benefits of energy efficiency to create more productive and comfortable work environments. The IDL will provide design consultations for daylighting and electric lighting as well as daylighting modeling.

“While the Boise IDL’s services compliment those offered by other BetterBricks Daylighting Labs located in Seattle, Portland and Eugene, Ore., we hope to offer more,” explains Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg, formerly with the University of Washington and the BetterBricks Daylighting Lab in Seattle and now head of the Integrated Design Lab in Boise. “Daylighting effects early design decisions and it sets the stage for implementing other disciplines, like electric lighting and HVAC.”

The Idaho IDL has already begun work in two Idaho school districts, Nampa and Meridian—the latter of which is the Northwest’s fastest growing school district—to advance design prototypes for new schools. If accepted, a proposed Nampa elementary school prototype could reduce 60 percent of the electric lighting load through the use of skylights in the gymnasium. In an effort to educate the next generation of designers in high performance building practices, the IDL will offer graduate level seminars to architecture and engineering students in integrated design topics. The lab will also involve students in research and modeling services through various IDL projects.

“We are still in the process of putting the proper tools together,” said Van Den Wymelenberg. “But we are building on a momentum that had already begun in Idaho. There is so much excitement and interest in what we are doing here. It is very fulfilling to be able to offer these resources to the local design community.”

BetterBricks is a free service that connects building professionals with the information, tools, training and consultation needed to design and construct high performance buildings. For more information, visit www.betterbricks.com or call the Idaho IDL at (208) 342-6817.