The Bioenergy Research and Demonstration Facility (BRDF), located at the UBC Vancouver campus, is an energy generation facility that processes renewable biomass sourced from urban wood waste to generate thermal energy for heating campus buildings. The building that houses the facility is built with mass timber and is one of the first industrial buildings in Canada to be constructed with CLT panel technology.

BRDF is a signature Campus as a Living Lab project, integrating UBC’s core academic mandate of research and teaching with a campus energy supply system.

Bioenergy System
- The facility uses biomass in the form of chipped clean wood waste from furniture manufacturing, sawmill residuals and municipal trimmings.
- Biomass is gasified to produce a clean synthetic gas (syngas), which is combusted to generate steam for heating campus buildings.
- The facility also houses a cogeneration engine which uses a mix of natural gas and renewable natural gas (upgraded biogas) to generate electricity as well as steam and hot water through recovered heat.
- BRDF produces 6 MW of thermal energy from the thermal mode and 2.4 MW of thermal energy from heat recovery of the cogeneration engine, which accounts for 25% of total campus heating and hot water needs per year.
- The cogeneration engine produces 2.0 MW of electrical energy, which accounts for 5% of the total campus electricity requirements per year.
- The facility has contributed to a 14% reduction in UBC’s total greenhouse gas emissions compared to 2007 levels.

Design Features
- The building consists of the main process floor for the power plant and an upper floor area for the operations control office and a multi-purpose lab.
- Glass walls along the sides of the building allow for public viewing of the facility operation.
- Acoustic louvers in the building envelope provide natural ventilation of the internal areas.

Mass Timber Products
- The CLT panels were fabricated locally, mostly from regionally sourced 90% pine beetle-affected lumber.
- CLT panel properties include high shear strength, durable surfaces, a natural wood aesthetic, and sufficient thickness to assist with mitigating sound transmission.

Mass Timber Carbon Savings
- The project required local community acceptance of the facility, which entailed multiple public engagement events prior to construction as well as a community engagement committee during the first year of operations.
- Since the facility is located adjacent to a residential neighbourhood, 24-hour air emission monitoring stations were installed to monitor air quality.

Partners
- Natural Resources Canada
- Western Economic Diversification Canada
- BC Innovative Clean Energy Fund
- Ministry of Forests, Mines and Lands
- FPInnovations
- Canadian Wood Council
- BC Bioenergy Network
- Sustainable Development Technology Canada
- BC Hydro
- Nexterra Systems Corp.
- GE Power

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