

**Elton+Hampton Architects**



**The Family Center**  
Somerville, MA

The Family Center is a non-profit mental health and social services facility that serves more than 500 families and couples each year. Its new building on Somerville Avenue in Union Square, Somerville expresses the child-friendly, family-centered philosophy of its staff and a respect for human and natural systems. The architect worked with Center staff and project team members to develop a design that met and responded flexibly to programming needs while enhancing environmental performance of the building. The \$2.8 mil project was completed in Fall 2002.

Natural daylight pours into the Center's public spaces through ground-level and clerestory windows. Waiting areas and play spaces are defined by residential scale spaces that provide both coziness and visibility for staff, and extend the reach of natural light. High-efficiency fluorescent lights with occupancy sensors augment light throughout the building. Healthy materials and Heat Recovery Ventilation mean that staff and clients have a continuing supply of fresh, uncompromised air. The building is predicted to operate at a minimum of 32% improved energy efficiency over Massachusetts Energy Code. Specific design and building innovations include the following:

- Renovation of an existing light-industrial building on an urban site
- Systems-based design and energy modeling

- Maximum use of natural daylighting; operable windows
- Tight building envelope and high-quality (recycled content) cellulose insulation
- Sealed-combustion 87% AFUE boiler and high EER chiller
- Occupant control of heating and cooling
- High-performance, argon-filled low-E windows
- High-efficiency fluorescent lighting w/ occupant sensors
- Engineered lumber and Hardiplank siding
- Heat Recovery Ventilation for individual fresh air supply
- Low-VOC paints and carpets; linoleum, wood, and recycled-tire flooring
- Low impact cleaning materials with trained crews