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31 Huron Street
City of Collingwood

Harbour House - Collingwood

This description aims to present the architectural decisions behind the proposed design for a mixed-use commercial/residential building located on 31 Huron Street, Town of Collingwood.

The project's relations to the context, site specific conditions, massing, and architectural expression are based on requirements and intentions as set forth in the Urban Design Manual of Collingwood and the Shipyards Architectural Design Guidelines.

The design stems from considerations on how the building and outdoor amenity will contribute to a livable town. It is sensitive to the natural and built environment through an attention to the heritage adjacency, a relation to the downtown, the adjacent arterial road Huron Street and an engaging streetscape, the context of the Shipyards, a future neighboring park, and the visual and physical proximity to the waterfront.





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The context

The site is defined by Side Launch Way to the north, Heritage Drive to the east, and Huron Street to the south. To the west, outside of the site boundaries but next to the proposed building, a future park is planned. Across from Huron Street the Veterans Cres – a green area in adjacency to the Collingwood Museum – is located.

From the future park, the building, and the outdoor amenity spaces there will be a stunning view over the Dry Dock past the proposed Perfect World mixed-use project to Collingwood Harbour and Nottawasaga Bay. At the end of Heritage Drive there is a view to the significant landmark Collingwood Grain Elevators (The Terminals) – an imposing structure symbolizing the historic commerce of Collingwood.

When arriving from the east of Collingwood, the site is perceived as the beginning of the downtown as well as a transition point to the Shipyards and the waterfront to the north. Furthermore, the location is ideal with walking distance to important Collingwood amenities, the nearby residential areas, and the landscape surrounding the town.

In that sense the, site calls for a building able to complement the strong context. It will be equally visible from all directions and should articulate the feeling of the place – an inspired visual echo of the surroundings - as well as it should express its own presence through a modern and contemporary architectural language.





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The Site

The position of the building on the site is in general accordance with the Waterfront Master Plan and safeguards the vistas to the waterfront and the impressive Terminals. Through this location and the architectural expression, the building is linked to the nature, the history and heritage, and 'the feel' of this unique site.

The building is defined as an L-shaped volume fronting Huron Street and the future park to the west. The L-shape frames a yard with the parking area to the northeast with driveways from Side Launch Way and Heritage Street.

In the northeastern corner, an outdoor amenity space is located for the residents. The area is planted with small trees and bushes and will act as a visual buffer to 'soften' the expression of the parking area as well as enhance the gateway along Heritage Drive to the harbour. The actual surface parking is in the shaded areas of the yard leaving the amenity space the sun exposure.



The overall architecture of the building is treated with equal attention to all directions. The site and location call for an expressive building no matter where it is seen from. The massing is subdivided into several vertical volumes with a lightweight feeling on top of a base with a firm expression. All volumes are defined by pitched roofs that, in combination with the folded or serrated shape of the façades, create a pleated design that is further articulated through sun and shadows on the façades.



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The commercial part of the building, with retail entrances and active windows, is located on ground floor facing Huron Street. The indoor amenity spaces for the residential part are located around the corner of the L-shape thus facing both the street, with a prominent entrance, and the future park. This will ensure active streetscapes as well as a sense of security for residents and pedestrians.

Along the western façade, a strip of outdoor amenity space is planned in relation to the park. The strip is intended to visually intertwine with the park and will be designed with an intention to mediate transitions between public and private. Through the park, there will be access to the nearby Dry Dock and waterfront.

From the parking area to the northeast of the site, a parking ramp leads to two levels of underground parking. In the inner corner of the L-shape the utility, trash, and delivery entries are located adjacent to the outdoor delivery space.

Along Huron Street an animated streetscape will enable street furniture and plant beds defining the retail entrances as well as the pedestrian zone of the sidewalk.





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The building

The overall massing of the building is L-shaped and composed of a series of vertical volumes that emerges when the façade is visually folded all the way around the building. The horizontal materiality of the building is divided into three: a sturdy base, a light middle, and a distinct top – the pitched roofs.

Through this combination of a vertical massing and horizontal materiality, we achieve a contemporary architectural expression with simple clear forms and a strong sense of scale allowing the building to be relevant to the streetscape as well as when seen from a distance.

The proposed building is a six-story building with a pitched roof that conceals the mechanical and technical facilities of the building.



The ground floor facing Huron Street is executed with extra ceiling height to fit the retail use as well as the indoor amenity space for the residents. The ground floor residential area in the northern part of the building is located on top of the underground lockers resulting in the floor level being raised above the surrounding terrain to increase the privacy for the units.

The ambition for the whole project is to express an honest materiality and a structural simplicity.



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The storefront façade at grade is designed in a natural stone in a dark tone to enhance the sturdiness of the base. Fenestration will be designed to accommodate the requirements for large display windows and give a warm sense of light, insight, and transparency. The windows in the base will be recessed and surrounded by angled natural stone and thus emphasize the almost heavy expression. Entrances will be included in the same design. Window and door frames are in a dark golden tone to differentiate them from the natural stone.



Material inspiration, base – natural stone.

The entrance for the residential units is placed in the western end towards Huron Street and is visually brought forward by recessing the entrance further and adding a warm glow to the interior by the use of wood, with an almost Nordic feeling to it, and artificial light. From the entrance there is access to the common indoor amenity space and vertical connection to all residential units.

This interaction between the inside of the retail and the sidewalk will result in an active and safe streetscape for pedestrians with eyes and light on the street and the opportunity for outdoor displays and street furniture like benches or plant beds. On the park side, the outdoor plant beds will define private and public zones.



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Cut-outs from proposed project, visualization – street front and park front.

The façades, for the residential part, on top of the base are clad with light colored metal siding mounted with vertical traces. The fenestration is combined with inset balconies and will create a simple and yet vivid expression of recessed and even openings. The balconies will, together with rooftop terraces, provide outdoor amenity space to almost every unit and supplement the areas at grade. Window frames are in a color matching the siding.



Material inspiration, façade and roof – metal siding.



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The exterior walls and ceilings of the balconies will be cladded with ceramic wood to give them a warm expression, whilst the outdoor floor is exposed concrete.

By means of the pleated façades and the inset balconies, residents will be protected from winds and insight from the surroundings and other units.

The roof of the building will visually appear as a continuation of the residential façades and be cladded with the same colored metal. The pleated shape of the façades creates a distinct division of the roof which is further expressed by introducing large rooftop terraces for penthouse units below the pitched roof. The materiality of the terraces will be similar to the inset balconies below.



Material inspiration, balconies – ceramic wood.



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Heritage considerations

The site itself is not included in Collingwood Downtown Heritage Conservation District Plan (HCD) but sits right on the edge. Huron Street, Heritage Drive, and the adjacent rebuilt railway station (now Collingwood Museum) are all included in HCD and define the site. Therefore, it has been a natural basis for the design of the proposed building to study the history of Collingwood and the intentions of HCD.

The Commercial Core around Hurontario Street is primarily defined by buildings and structures erected after the great fire in 1881 until the early 20th century. Hurontario Street has its own unique expression and is defined by a homogenous building mass in two-three stories, brick, and beautiful detailing. It is one of the best preserved historic main streets in Ontario.

The continuation of Hurontario Street defined the beginning of the industrial harbour and the history of the shipbuilding industry in Collingwood. Collingwood was 'the town with a ship at the end of the street'. On the other side of the original harbour was The Spit with the amazing Grain Elevators. The train spit was the terminus of the railroad and linked the harbour to the railway station, the town, and the rest of the country.

Together these important heritage elements of Collingwood are testimonies of the historic and economic prosperity of the town from its founding in 1855.

The site is located in The Shipyards area and it is our architectural intention to visually link the proposed building to the industrial buildings on the waterfront. The Grain Elevators (The Terminals) at the waterfront contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the town's origin and development, and the new building will act as a gateway to The Spit with the iconic Collingwood Terminals as a backdrop.

Their expression is strong and yet refined – shaped by engineering and mechanical systems. Inspiration can be found in the materiality, the repetition in shapes, the geometrical simplicity and unostentatious style. The pitched roofs and the vertical breaks in the façades of the proposed building read in scale to the existing harbour buildings and become a refined and modern interpretation of harbour architecture, warehouses, and the powerful verticality of The Terminals.

It seems only appropriate that the building becomes a modern interpretation of The Terminals, enhances the heritage character of the actual Heritage District and acts as an entry point to the town.



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Architectural heritage inspiration from Collingwood and Aarhus, Denmark.

"Memories still abound of the days when the name Collingwood was synonymous with the Great Lakes and the lakers that ruled their waters."

Christine E. Cowley in Butchers, Bakers & Building the Lakers.

