

International Grand Prize

Housing the Fort Garry: Urban Housing for the Fort Garry Site

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This project developed out of the intention to explore new ways of combining private and public spaces in an urban environment. It was felt that, in order for housing to truly become part of the city, it must engage itself with other functions on the ground plane. Thus, in developing this scheme of a mixture of residential, commercial, and recreational uses, it was decided to break from the typical urban pattern of public spaces on the lower levels and private spaces above. Instead, half of the ground plane was devoted to residential spaces grouped around semiprivate courtyards. The other half was assigned to large functions - a recreation center and a grocery store - which would be used not only by the residents of the development, but also by members of the public who spend time downtown.

The zone of interface between the public and private spaces became an opportunity to carefully design passages which define a necessary separation by also provide spaces of interaction focussed around the points of vertical circulation. The line of separation between public and private is loosely traced by a two story "tunnel" which runs north-south through the site. On its upper level, it connects the building blocks and the hotel. On its lower level it is a linear running track connecting the various recreation facilities.

During the process of exploring these issues of spatial arrangements, several aspects of the site became influential:

Historic Hotel Ft. Garry. The project respects the scale of the prominent hotel, develops a terrace directly to the south of the hotel, and provides an overhead link to new recreation and shopping facilities to be shared by the hotel guests.

River Walk System. The project develops a public node at its southeast corner where it connects to the river walk system of Bonnycastle Park, which, in turn, connects to the historic Forks Site. The node is designed as a point of entry to the site with a cafe, deli, outdoor terrace, and lounge.

Downtown Business Core. The programming of the spaces reflects a consideration for the young professionals who work downtown. Two categories of unit types are provided: row houses on a courtyard and apartment units on

a single-loaded corridor. The grocery store and the sports facility - standards in the suburban landscape - are returned to the heart of the city.

Climatic Conditions. Situated in a cold, cold city (Winnipeg), the development maximizes southern exposure for the residential units. The courtyards are shaped to protect against northwest winds.

Edge Condition. The site is bounded by two contrasting zones: to the east is Main Street and the Forks Development; to the west are a number of residential blocks. The project thus presents its public face to the east and its private face to the west.

JURY COMMENTS

The scheme is very well resolved at all the levels that you would expect in a competition of this kind, i.e. at the level of the unit as well as the way the units are aggregated together in the block. It also clearly integrates the non-residential component in a very direct but interesting way. There's a lot of variety here, for instance the courtyards on the roof, the balcony/fire-escape/walkway system on the sides, and the smaller courtyards below. The section is quite sophisticated in the way in which it separates public functions from those which are semi-private. You can imagine a sense of community developing here - the scale of it, the number of dwelling units, the grocery store, the recreation center, they seem in "sync" with one another.

It's also doing quite a lot of work in terms of the context of the city. It's repairing a block in Winnipeg and addressing itself in a realistic manner to providing a clear linkage between the river and the central part of the city. It responds nicely to the existing architecture. In addition, the south orientation of the units responds very well to the climate. It's a scheme in which there is a strong sense of architecture as distinct from simply the planning of units and the strategy of how you work with blocks. Perhaps the scheme's most distinguishing characteristic is that it's a strong urban housing scheme. They should build it!

