

Colourful history breathes new life into North End Hamilton warehouse

by [Amy Kouniakis](#) on February 3, 2020



There are a lot of heritage buildings throughout Hamilton that have been rejuvenated in recent years to get in step with the growth of the city.

A lot of these properties, if we're lucky, gain new life and purpose while maintaining a piece of its history.

There's one project in North Hamilton near the redeveloping waterfront, where the balance seems to have been struck.

The Cool Urban Towns on Brock Street have a long colourful history that inspired a local architect to tap into his love of an iconic Quentin Tarantino movie for design inspiration.

Constructed in 1883, the warehouse at 11 Brock Street started out on the up and up as a metal fabrication and tool-making shop for the Jobborn Manufacturing Company who held U.S. patents from 1888 to 1905 to make parts for Ford until the 1960s.

During Prohibition, a rum-running operation is believed to have been housed at the property which was equipped with a barrel ramp that has been incorporated into the current design.

After Thier + Curran, the architects who redeveloped the building into three modern townhouses, took possession of the property and started the process of redeveloping, they uncovered more than 100 Bell phone lines.

This led them to believe that a mob boiler room likely operated out of the warehouse in the 1970s, the property sales rep, Conni Robinson of Pottruff & Oliver Realty, told InTheHammer.

“It [the property] definitely had a shady history,” she said.

But it’s this checkered past and the waterfront’s hopeful future that helped shape the warehouse’s current function and design.

Bill Curran, who led the project and who hails from Hamilton’s East End, ran with the history they uncovered and tapped into his favourite movie, Reservoir Dogs, for inspiration.

The result is a stunning series of three adaptive reuse free-hold townhouse properties lovingly named after characters in Tarantino’s masterpiece: Mr. Orange, Mr. Pink and Mr. White.

Curran and his team worked closely with the City of Hamilton to properly remediate the property, Robinson said, and towards the goal of gentrifying and avoiding sprawl for new housing options.

Every detail of the three homes, two of which have already been sold, were selected with the building’s history, curated products from across the globe and that of its neighbourhood and city, in mind.

“They’re telling a story with each unit,” Robinson said.

The three distinct front doors were created by renowned Hamilton metal artist and “thing-maker” Dave Hind.

Some of the newer, modern elements, like corrugated metal siding, are a nod to the city’s industrial past while the wood and stone design features soften the industrial harshness and serve as a reminder of our proximity to the escarpment.

Inside, much of the timber restored is 100-year-old Douglas Fir and each unit’s flow and design are all its own.

“Even the location (near the West Harbour) is deliberate,” Robinson said. “In previous years, we abandoned the water and now we’re realizing its potential and importance.”

It’s true, with the redevelopment of the waterfront and a ramping up of services to the West Harbour GO, the desire to return to the area has been increasing exponentially in recent years.

If you’re among those who want to be closer to the water, you may be interested to know that Mr. Pink (#9 Brock Street) is still actually up for grabs.

The 1,416-sq.-ft. custom-designed home features one bedroom plus den, one bathroom, front and rear greenspace, soaring ceilings, plenty of natural light, a parking space, high-end appliances and oceans of character.



