

HALDIMAND COUNTY CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

by ROBIN BRUNET



With its massing of dynamic forms and careful use of materials that at once seem traditional and yet distinctly modern, the Haldimand County's new Central Administration Building is appropriate for a rural Ontario community that is slowly evolving due to its proximity to the Greater Toronto Area.

Development of the facility was approved by Haldimand County Council in February of 2016, after thorough evaluation and community consultation; Haldimand County mayor Ken Hewitt told media of the design by Thier + Curran Architects Inc. (TCA), "It's pragmatic, cost-effective, and supports the advancement of our corporate pillars." Indeed, the building would replace several outdated facilities across the municipality that were in need of major capital work, in addition to a rental space that was costing the county considerable expense yearly.

Bill Curran, principal at TCA, added, "It's a state-of-the-art building for 2050. We were looking ahead, trying to make sure we have a good building that will endure."

The building centralizes municipal services from surrounding communities and is organized to provide Council and Provincial Offences Act functions as well as customer service needs on the main floor. The second floor provides all of the functions associated with development and business services, and the third floor houses divisions that provide support functions.

Kyle Slote, senior associate at TCA, says the design arose from the three programming elements: the court/council chambers, the lobby, and the office space. The building's appearance was also painstakingly scaled and massed to respect the rural ambiance of the community and adjacent single-family dwellings. "With regards to our three programming

elements, the all-important council chamber was designed as a triangular component with a dramatic sloped metal roof," says Slote, adding that limestone cladding would augment the gravitas of the chamber.

TCA created an upward-swooping steel frame canopy with wood decking on the underside to highlight the main entrance and provide a welcoming amenity for visitors. Although the site was fairly narrow, a civic plaza was created by reclaiming an existing driveway, and defined by new brick walls and paving, plus planters, benches, and light bollards.

Inside, the two-storey lobby atrium organizes the building's circulation with overlooks from the second floor. "Large overhangs provide sun control, and the ceiling features the same exposed wood deck as the entry canopy," says Slote, referring to Douglas Fir structural wood decking left exposed and supported by steel beams for the lobby ceiling. A public stair with an illuminated "lantern" reaching skyward is the building's tallest element.

The stakeholders and architects quickly found that colour usage and lighting would be the most effective (and inexpensive) tools to impart warmth and dynamism to the interior spaces. "Wood – including birch and zebra wood – was also effective, such as a wood ceiling for the council chambers and oversize wood doors in the lobby," says Slote. Eventually, the interior ambiance would be augmented with colourful murals created by Hamilton artist Jamie Lawson of Poly Studio.

A productive open format on each level of the office wing was achieved by creating closed offices in the middle of the floor plate and arranging work pods of differing scales around them. "We developed a series of spaces ranging from quiet to collaborative, an example of the latter being ground



floor staff space spilling out onto a patio, with a kitchen island and booths along one wall," says Slote.

Generous access to daylight and views for staff was achieved with shared circulation and informal meeting spaces along the perimeter of the building. Operable windows carefully patterned in varied sizes provide natural ventilation for greater thermal comfort, further augmented with localized zoning of the HVAC (an energy-efficient heat pump system) to allow greater control and temperature response.

Matheson Constructors broke ground on the project in May of 2018. Construction consisted of a steel framed superstructure supporting precast hollowcore slabs with a cast-in-place reinforced concrete core for

LOCATION

53 Thorburn Street S., Cayuga, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER

Haldimand County

ARCHITECT

Thier + Curran Architects Inc. (TCA)

GENERAL CONTRACTOR

Matheson Constructors

STRUCTURAL/CIVIL CONSULTANT

Strik Baldinelli Moniz Ltd.

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT

JAIN Sustainability Consultants

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

PMA Landscape Architects

TOTAL SIZE

43,000 square feet

TOTAL COST

\$21 million



lateral stability. Following the architect's specs, Matheson lined the ground level exterior with charcoal brick and made extensive use of Prodema wood panels of varying colours and widths for the upper levels.

The new Haldimand Central Administration Building opened in February of 2020, and Slote gives full credit to the Haldimand County stakeholders for the success of the project. "They were hands on in the best sense of the term," he says. "They cared deeply about the project and trusted us, and we were inspired to bring their programming requirements to life in an exciting way." **A**