

Award

+VG ARCHITECTS

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Investing In The Future



ETHENNONHAWAHSTIHNEN' COMMUNITY RECREATION CENTRE & LIBRARY

by ROBIN BRUNET

Concord Park Place in North York is a neighbourhood still very much in growth mode, forecast to accommodate 10,000 residents across 20 towers when the development is completed. Regional services are critical to its success, which is why the City of Toronto is especially proud of its new community recreational centre and library named in the Huron-Wendat Nation language: Ethennonnhawahstihnen'.

The 218,400-square-foot facility, located in Concord Park Place, contains a 27,000-square-foot aquatic centre with a six-lane lap pool, leisure pool, spectator viewing area, and change rooms, as well as a 38,000-square-foot recreation centre with a double gym, fitness centre, indoor running track, and many other amenities.

A new Toronto Public Library branch occupies 13,000 square feet, while a 6,400-square-foot childcare facility contributes to Ethennonnhawahstihnen' being the largest such community centre in Toronto.

Mario Pecchia, program manager, capital projects – Parks, Forestry and Recreation for the City of Toronto, says, “We had our fair share of challenges on this project but worked our way through them methodically, and we were fortunate to have architects as experienced as that of MJMA Architecture & Design: they recognized the need to balance good design with budget. They were also great collaborators and brought a lot to the table.”

Robert Allen, partner at MJMA Architecture & Design, says, “We were tasked with designing a facility that would not only be functional and aesthetically pleasing, but also incorporate numerous sustainability elements as well as fitting in with the diverse heights of surrounding buildings.”

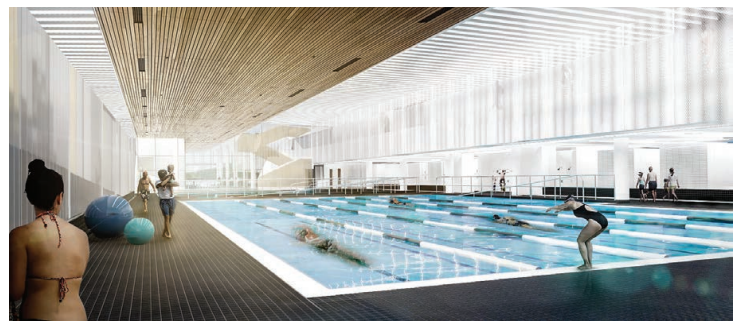
Viktors Jaunkalns, founding partner at MJMA Architecture & Design, elaborates, “Our site was small at about 100,000 square feet or so, with high-density mixed-use towers to the east and single-family homes to the west. So our design was very much influenced by these circumstances, and we wound up doing what could be described as ‘creative stacking.’”

Essentially, the architects designed two bar-shaped volumes of unequal heights: to the west a lower, narrower bar allows for a nine-metre setback facing the single-family homes, buffered by a landscaped area of terraces and a playground for the childcare centre (the western bar also houses meeting, art, and game rooms, plus a public kitchen).

The upper levels of the taller four-storey eastern bar are split into two volumes of unequal height. The eastern bar features full-height windows along its primary façade for transparency to an interior gymnasium and running track, multipurpose activity room, and dance and fitness studios. These windows are interspersed with undulating porcelain panels separated by zinc battens, which correspond to the cladding of the western bar.

Allen notes that both volumes intersect with a street level aquatic centre and library. “Also, a vegetated roof runs the length of the building, providing pedestrian cover at grade and leading toward the main entrance.” Here, a central atrium with a four-storey staircase connects all floors and serves as a community hub.

Jaunkalns adds that because regulations stated that 10 percent of the facility’s power had to be generated on site, the roof was topped with photovoltaic panels. Some of the facility’s other sustainability measures focus on



LOCATION
100 Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Lane,
Toronto, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER
City of Toronto

ARCHITECT
MJMA Architecture & Design

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Eastern Construction Company Limited

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
Blackwell Structural Engineers

MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
Smith + Andersen

TOTAL SIZE
218,400 square feet

TOTAL COST
\$96 million

RENDERINGS COURTESY MJMA ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

the site’s water strategy, including bioswales and stormwater drainage and retention; additionally, passive light and temperature control was incorporated both inside and out.

Eastern Construction Company Limited broke ground in late 2018, tasked with erecting a steel structure with post tensioned concrete beams for the double-height swimming pool and gym (which are stacked on top of each other).

Pecchia says, “During excavation for the three levels of underground parking we encountered more ground water than anticipated, but this was taken care of with de-watering. The greatest challenge of the construction was maintaining a safe site during the worst of the COVID outbreaks. There

were also material and labour shortages during this time, but we worked through the processes.”

Pecchia adds that the tight site meant very little room for laydown or staging, and this required careful coordination of just-in-time deliveries.

As the Ethennonnhawahstihnen' Community Recreation Centre & Library nears completion, Allen expresses gratitude for a successful outcome. “There wasn’t nearly enough room on site for ideal construction circumstances, yet Eastern and the trades pulled it off,” he says. “As for the City of Toronto, we’ve worked on numerous projects together and they’re a terrific client. This particular project is very special – and memorable.” **A**